

ARTICLE 47

Advisory Committee 8, Church Order I, Rev. John A. Ooms reporting, presents the following:

I. Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000 (majority report)

A. Materials

1. Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000 Report, pp. 351-407
2. Overtures 1-13, pp. 451-88
3. Overtures 28-31, Supplement
4. Communications 2 and 3, pp. 514-15
5. Communication 5, Supplement

B. Note

The study committee alerts synod to a significant error on page 383, fifth paragraph, fourth line: "two stances allowed by Scripture" should read, "two stances allowed by synod."

C. Observations

1. The members of the advisory committee, both majority and minority, approached their work with a spirit of cooperation in order to evaluate the report of the study committee and serve synod with a unified report. The committee spent many hours in dialogue with four members of the study committee to understand as clearly as possible the report and the intent of its authors. Some members of the advisory committee were of a mind to return to the position of 1994 regarding the ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist. Others wished to delete the word "male" from Church Order Article 3-a. Some wished to stand by the recommendations of the study committee and in general continue in the course initiated by Synod 1995. Through respectful listening and speaking with one another, the committee shared the same experience as that of the study committee, which was "able to carry out its work in a spirit of love, honesty, and unity of purpose" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 353). All but two of our members agreed to work with the recommendations of the study committee. What the advisory committee of 1995 wrote captures our experience as well:

In spite of our differences, there was a constant appreciation for the faith of each member and for the conscientious approach toward the problem on the part of every member. Perhaps if this attitude had been more widely practiced on both sides in the denomination, this issue would not have caused as much pain and disunity as it has.

(Acts of Synod, 1995, p. 726, Section B)

2. Synod 1995's decision to review the matter of women's ordination to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist in the year 2000 seems to have been interpreted as a moratorium on discussing the issue of women's ordination by the members of the church. The advisory committee desires that the church not become complacent over the existence of differing and some-

times conflicting interpretations of Scripture. Such differences ought to make us restless for dialogue rather than resigned to silence. This restlessness must not drive us apart. Rather, it must spur us on to work together for a deeper understanding that may lead to a consensus that we cannot imagine at the present time.

3. Several overtures asking synod to return to the position of 1994 used the words "clear" or "clearly" to describe the Scripture's teachings on the matter of the ordination of women. Our committee recognizes that not only did the majority report of Synod 1995 take exception to this designation; the minority report did as well: "That synod declare that Synod 1994, in stating that 'Scripture was clear,' failed to recognize that both sides had faithfully sought to interpret Scripture on this issue" (*Acts of Synod, 1995*, p. 731, Section C, 2).
4. In the recent issue of *Calvin Seminary Forum* (Summer 2000, Vol. 7, No. 2), Dr. Henry Zwaanstra rightly observes that

great matters of truth are never satisfactorily settled in the church by conducting surveys, nor by a raising of hands or a simple counting of ballots. They are settled only when the church reaches a consensus based on God's Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To reach such a consensus sometimes takes a long time.

Our committee is convinced that synod ought not to be pressed at this time to adjudicate the validity of various interpretations by majority vote. Past attempts to resolve the issue of women's ordination in this way have proved to be unsuccessful and dissatisfying. Greater consensus must come on the local and classical level first.

5. It is consistent with the logic and direction of both the decision of Synod 1995 and of the study committee's report of Synod 2000 to allow classes that have declared the word "male" in Article 3-a of the Church Order inoperative to delegate women officebearers to synod. However, out of consideration for the differing convictions and painful situations within churches and classes of our denomination, we do not believe it would be wise at this time to delegate women to synod.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to John Van Ryn (chair), William Koopmans, Gayla Postma, and Jack Vos (reporter) for the discussion of this report.

—Granted

2. That synod declare that, although there are within the denomination firmly held differences on the issue of ordaining women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, these differences do not separate us from Christ, nor are they of such an essential nature that they warrant division within the church. Therefore, it is our responsibility to seek earnestly to live together in unity and to minister together for the glory of God.

Grounds:

- a. The Lord of the church and his apostles call us to live in unity (John 17; Eph. 4:1-3).
 - b. In spite of different conclusions, all have drawn their arguments from Scripture and are together in desiring to honor Christ as Head of the church.
 - c. As a denomination we have a rich heritage together and have been led into many important ministries.
 - d. Living and serving together in love will be a blessing to us and our children, a witness to other churches and the world, and God glorifying.
3. That synod acknowledge that the church continues to struggle communally with the differences among us on the issue of the ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist and that with the Spirit's guidance it is striving to reach an ever-broadening consensus.

Grounds:

- a. There is a need for continued discussion for the sake of achieving greater clarity on the issue of the ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.
 - b. There is a need to lower the passion level people experience because of the differences of opinion.
 - c. There is a need to learn how to approach our differences from the perspective of the unity we have in Christ.
 - d. There is a need to honor the mutual desire to listen to Scripture as the wholly reliable Word of God.
4. That synod again urge councils and classes to nurture and make appropriate provision for the full use of the gifts that the Spirit gives to all their members, both women and men.

Grounds:

- a. Such use of the Spirit's gifts is an essential part of honoring Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church.
 - b. Such use of the Spirit's gifts enriches the church's ministry, witness, and fellowship.
 - c. Such use of the Spirit's gifts is mandatory, regardless of the stance taken on the women-in-office issue.
5. That synod retain the classical-local option approved in 1995 and approve the following regulations as Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a.

Grounds:

- a. There is a need for continued discussion for the sake of achieving greater clarity on the issue of ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.
- b. There is a need to lower the passion level people experience because of the differences of opinion.
- c. There is a need to learn how to approach our differences from the perspective of the unity we have in Christ.
- d. There is a need to honor the mutual desire to listen to Scripture as the wholly reliable Word of God.

Proposed Supplement, Article 3-a

A. A classis may, in response to local needs and circumstances, declare that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative and authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

B. Regulations

1. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not, out of consideration for the conviction of other classes, delegate women officebearers to synod.

Grounds:

- a. The 1995 decision of synod allows classical-local option in the ordination of women as ministers, elders, and evangelists. Since the majority of classes have not exercised that option, the classes which have taken that decision ought to refrain from delegating women to synod.
 - b. For the unity of the church it seems wise at this time to retain this regulation.
 - c. The classical-local option adopted by synod allows members to transfer from one congregation to another and congregations to transfer from one classis to another, but a comparable transfer for conviction's sake is not possible at the synodical level.
2. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches may appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.
 3. Synodical deputies shall not be asked to participate against their conviction in any matter relating to ministers of the Word, as provided in Articles 6-18 and 82-84 of the Church Order.
 4. If a local congregation, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, desires to call and ordain a female pastor or evangelist but its classis has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, the classis may declare an exception to Article 3-a and allow the church to proceed, but it may also make an additional ruling that the female pastor may not be delegated to classis until classis extends an invitation. No members of classis shall be required to participate against their convictions in processing ministerial credentials or taking part in a candidate's examination.

Grounds:

- a. This arrangement would allow local congregations to call the personnel they deem necessary while remaining in covenant with their classes and respecting the convictions of neighboring churches that may not approve of women in ordained offices.
 - b. It provides a more viable alternative for such congregations than switching to classes that do permit the ordination of women to all offices.
 - c. This has already proved to be a workable solution in Classis Kalamazoo and Classis Pacific Northwest.
5. A classis that has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist shall nevertheless acknowledge a church's right, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances,

to take exception to the decision of classes as it applies to the office of elder, provided that the role of women elders is restricted to the local churches in which they hold office.

6. Synodical agencies may appoint or approve the appointment of women as ministers of the Word for fields of labor within classes where women are permitted to hold office. Women ministers may not be approved for fields of labor outside North America where our partner churches do not permit the ordination of women.
7. In the consideration of applications submitted by qualified women for candidacy for the office of minister of the Word, both the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary and synod shall ensure that trustees and delegates will not be forced to participate against their convictions. In the declaration of candidacy, delegates may exercise their right to abstain from voting.
8. The general secretary shall maintain a list of classes that have authorized their constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist and shall publish the list annually in the *Agenda for Synod* and in the *Yearbook*.

Note: The grounds listed in 1 and 4 above are not intended for inclusion in the supplement. They are intended only to serve synod in its deliberations.

6. That Synod 2003 appoint a committee consisting of an appropriate balance of men and women to review the classical-local option with respect to women serving in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist and to report its findings to Synod 2005.

Grounds:

- a. Since 1995 little public discussion has taken place to bring the church to unified insight into the issue.
- b. This time line provides opportunity for continuing discussion.
7. That synod invite those who have become estranged from the Christian Reformed Church over the issue of women in office to study this report, read it for the further clarity it may provide, and receive it as a warm invitation for the restoration of fellowship; and that synod urge the Interchurch Relations Committee to use this report in suitable ways to promote understanding among churches with which the denomination has or had ecumenical ties and to seek restoration where these ties have been broken.
8. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 28, 29, 30, 31 and Communications 2, 3, and 5.
9. That synod declare the work of the study committee completed and dismiss it with thanks for its service.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report re the issue of women in office is presented as information by Elder Henry F. Bakker:

Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000 (minority report)

A. Materials

1. Report of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000, pp. 351-407
2. Overture 5, pp. 455-59
3. Overture 8, pp. 462-68

B. Background

The minority of the advisory committee wishes to express its appreciation for the work of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000 and the work of Advisory Committee 8. The atmosphere of mutual respect, diligence, and helpfulness among all members of the advisory group has been most refreshing. This attitude has been very effective in advancing the discussion. Our hope is that synod and our denomination will also deal with this issue in a similar manner.

This committee supports majority-report Recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 4 and finds them helpful in encouraging the search for unity and scriptural truth. We believe, however, that Recommendation 5 of the majority report does not point the CRCNA to the best scriptural interpretation and therefore should not be approved. We believe that the voice heard in the majority of the overtures to synod must be recognized by synod and that the church would not be well served if this position were not presented.

The CRCNA's rich history has resulted from the firm foundation of Scripture and a refusal to change its teachings without a convincing scriptural argument. While disagreement is painful for us all, we must state that there are Scripture passages that cannot be convincingly explained with the arguments presented by the study committee.

C. Observations

1. Our membership rolls exhibit the impact of the years of struggle with this issue. During the 1980s the CRC realized an average annual increase in membership of 2,186 members per year. In the 1990s we witnessed an average membership decline of 3,786 members per year.
2. That our difficulties are not over is evident from the fact that a noticeable majority of the overtures presented to this committee call the CRC to return to its historic (1994) position. The dissatisfaction remains.
3. The minority of the committee believes that the data indicate that the acceptance of both positions regarding women in office will continue the conflict. Regardless of the pain, the answer needs to be determined by the same authority used through the years, the Scriptures. The church has acknowledged that both views are based on Scripture. Two contrary interpretations of biblical teaching cannot both be equally legitimate.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod delete the supplement to Church Order Article 3-a, adopted at Synod 1995. Convincing scriptural argument must be presented before a change in position is to be embraced.

2. That synod terminate the ordination of women ministers and evangelists in the Christian Reformed Church no later than one year from the date this recommendation may be approved and terminate ordination of women elders when the terms of present women elders expire but no later than three years from their installation.
3. That synod seek to reestablish ecclesiastical fellowship with churches and organizations that have severed relations with the Christian Reformed Church because of the decision allowing women to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

Grounds:

The church's historic practice is mandated by Scripture:

- a. I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Both Scriptures give solid direction as to the qualifications of an elder. The masculine requirement is unavoidable.
- b. I Timothy 2:11-3:7. I Timothy 2:11-12 states that women are not to have authority over men. I Timothy 3:1-13 continues with an immediate application of this teaching to the offices of the church. Recent scholarship concerning the meaning of the word translated "authority," not available to Synod 1995, reaffirms the traditional understanding of this word, namely, the rightful and appropriate exercise of authority, and it does not mean an abuse of authority or "lording it over" another.
- c. The general analogy of Scripture supports the inclusion of men alone in the office of minister, evangelist, and elder. The general analogy is defined as biblical teaching which "does not rest on the explicit statements of the Bible, but on the obvious scope and importance of its teachings as a whole" (Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 164-65). Thus, while Scripture teaches that men and women are equally created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28) and equally redeemed by Christ (Gal. 3:28), it also teaches that men and women, both in the original created state and in the present redeemed state, have diverse roles and responsibilities. This diversity is seen in creation. This diversity is also seen in redemption:
 - In general, man is called the head of woman (I Cor. 11:3, 7-9).
 - In the family the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:22-24; I Pet. 3:1, 5-6).
 - In the church male leadership is seen in the New Testament.
 - Jesus chose only male apostles.
 - All pastors and elders in the New Testament are male.
 - In addition to the passages from I Timothy and I Corinthians cited above, Paul teaches male leadership in the church in the teaching and ruling offices (see Titus 1:6).
- d. The biblical texts cited in support of the proposed change in Church Order Article 3-a are not persuasive.
 - Genesis 1:26-28 teaches that men and women equally bear the image of God but does not prove that one may hold ecclesiastical office simply because one bears the image of God.
 - Acts 2:17-18 describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all God's people but does not prove that all who have the Spirit may hold ecclesiastical office.

- Galatians 3:28 declares that men and women are one in Christ, but that fact does not mean that women may hold ecclesiastical office any more than it means that the Christian husband is not the head of his wife (Eph. 5:23).
4. That synod invite those who have become estranged from the Christian Reformed Church over the issue of women in office to understand the basis for both positions found jointly in the majority and minority reports of the advisory committee along with the report from the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000. An informed choice seems to be a wiser choice.
 5. That synod declare that this be the answer to Overtures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 28, 29, 30 and Communications 2, 3, and 5.
 6. That synod declare that the majority report position regarding Overture 14 be upheld.
 7. That synod declare the work of the study committee completed and dismiss it with thanks for its service.

Synod returns to its consideration of the recommendations of the advisory committee's majority report.

D. Recommendations (continued)

2. That synod declare that, although there are within the denomination firmly held differences on the issue of ordaining women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, these differences do not separate us from Christ, nor are they of such an essential nature that they warrant division within the church. Therefore, it is our responsibility to seek earnestly to live together in unity and to minister together for the glory of God.

Grounds:

- a. The Lord of the church and his apostles call us to live in unity (John 17; Eph. 4:1-3).
 - b. In spite of different conclusions, all have drawn their arguments from Scripture and are together in desiring to honor Christ as Head of the church.
 - c. As a denomination we have a rich heritage together and have been led into many important ministries.
 - d. Living and serving together in love will be a blessing to us and our children, a witness to other churches and the world, and God glorifying.
- Adopted*

3. That synod acknowledge that the church continues to struggle communally with the differences among us on the issue of the ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist and that with the Spirit's guidance it is striving to reach an ever-broadening consensus.

Grounds:

- a. There is a need for continued discussion for the sake of achieving greater clarity on the issue of the ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

- b. There is a need to lower the passion level people experience because of the differences of opinion.
- c. There is a need to learn how to approach our differences from the perspective of the unity we have in Christ.
- d. There is a need to honor the mutual desire to listen to Scripture as the wholly reliable Word of God.

— Adopted

4. That synod again urge councils and classes to nurture and make appropriate provision for the full use of the gifts that the Spirit gives to all their members, both women and men.

Grounds:

- a. Such use of the Spirit's gifts is an essential part of honoring Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church.
- b. Such use of the Spirit's gifts enriches the church's ministry, witness, and fellowship.
- c. Such use of the Spirit's gifts is mandatory, regardless of the stance taken on the women-in-office issue.

— Adopted

A delegate moves that Recommendation 5 be divided into two parts for voting purposes.

— Adopted

(As a result of splitting Recommendation 5, Recommendations 5-9 of the advisory-committee's majority report are renumbered from Article 47, I, D, 5.)

5. That synod retain the classical-local option approved in 1995.
The president offers a prayer for wisdom and guidance for the delegates as they vote.

— Adopted

The following negative votes are registered: Jason C. Van Doesburg (Alberta North), Thomas C. Kroesbergen (Chatham), John D. Wassenaar (Chicago South), John A. Vermeer (Heartland), Raymond F. Ooms (Illiana), Bradley W. Center (Northern Michigan), David A. Bosch (Minnkota), Thomas R. Dykstra (Pella), Ronald J. Meyer (Zeeland).

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued in Article 50.)

ARTICLE 48

The evening session is adjourned; Rev. Bernard J. Haan leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY MORNING, June 15, 2000
Tenth Session

ARTICLE 49

Rev. George Boyd, ethnic adviser, announces *Psalter Hymnal* 249, "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty," and reads from Revelation 4:8-11. He leads in opening prayer and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 504, "Holy God, We Praise Your Name."

The roll call indicates that all delegates are present.

ARTICLE 50

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued from Article 47.)

Advisory Committee 8, Church Order I, Rev. John A. Ooms reporting, presents the following:

Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000

A. Materials

1. Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000 Report, pp. 351-407
2. Overtures 1-13, pp. 451-88
3. Overtures 28-31, Supplement
4. Communications 2 and 3, pp. 514-15
5. Communication 5, Supplement

D. Recommendations (continued)

6. That synod approve the following regulations as Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a.

Proposed supplement

- A. A classis may, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, declare that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative and authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

—Adopted

B. Regulations

1. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not, out of consideration for the conviction of other classes, delegate women officebearers to synod.

Grounds:

- a. The 1995 decision of synod allows classical-local option in the ordination of women as ministers, elders, and evangelists. Since the majority of classes have not exercised that option, the classes which have taken that decision ought to refrain from delegating women to synod.
- b. For the unity of the church it seems wise at this time to retain this regulation.

- c. The classical-local option adopted by synod allows members to transfer from one congregation to another and congregations to transfer from one classis to another, but a comparable transfer for conviction's sake is not possible at the synodical level.

—*Adopted*

2. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches may appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.

—*Defeated*

3. Synodical deputies shall not be asked to participate against their conviction in any matter relating to ministers of the Word as provided in Articles 6-18 and 82-84 of the Church Order.

—*Adopted*

4. If a local congregation, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, desires to call and ordain a female pastor or evangelist but its classis has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, the classis is encouraged to declare an exception to Church Order Article 3-a and allow the church to proceed, but it may also make an additional ruling that the female pastor may not be delegated to classis until classis extends an invitation. No members of classis shall be required to participate against their convictions in a candidate's examination or in processing ministerial credentials or taking part in a candidate's examination.

Grounds:

- a. This arrangement would allow local congregations to call the personnel they deem necessary while remaining in covenant with their classes and respecting the convictions of neighboring churches that may not approve of women in ordained offices.
- b. It provides a more viable alternative for such congregations than switching to classes that do permit the ordination of women to all offices.
- c. This has already proved to be a workable solution in Classis Kalamazoo and Classis Pacific Northwest.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered: Jason C. Van Doesburg (Alberta North), John A. Vermeer (Heartland).

5. A classis that has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist shall nevertheless acknowledge a church's right, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, to take exception to the decision of classis as it applies to the office of elder, provided that the role of women elders is restricted to the local churches in which they hold office.

—*Adopted*

6. Synodical agencies may appoint or approve the appointment of women as ministers of the Word for fields of labor within classes where women are permitted to hold office. Women ministers may not be approved for fields of labor outside North America where our partner churches do not permit the ordination of women.

—*Adopted*

7. In the consideration of applications submitted by qualified women for candidacy for the office of minister of the Word, both the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary and synod shall ensure that trustees and delegates will not be forced to participate against their convictions. In the declaration of candidacy delegates may exercise their right to abstain from voting.

—Adopted

8. The general secretary shall maintain a list of classes that have authorized their constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist and shall publish the list annually in the *Agenda for Synod* and in the *Yearbook*.

—Adopted

Note: The grounds listed in 1 and 4 above are not intended for inclusion in the supplement. They are intended only to serve synod in its deliberations.

Grounds:

- a. There is a need for continued discussion for the sake of achieving greater clarity on the issue of ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.
 - b. There is a need to lower the passion level people experience because of the differences of opinion.
 - c. There is a need to learn how to approach our differences from out of the unity we have in Christ.
 - d. There is a need to honor the mutual desire to listen to Scripture as the wholly reliable Word of God.
7. That Synod 2003 appoint a committee consisting of an appropriate balance of men and women to review the classical-local option with respect to women serving in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist and to report its findings to Synod 2005.

Grounds:

- a. Since 1995 little public discussion has taken place to bring the church to unified insight into the issue.
 - b. This time line provides opportunity for continuing discussion.
- Adopted
8. That synod invite those who have become estranged from the Christian Reformed Church over the issue of women in office to study this report, read it for the further clarity it may provide, and receive it as a warm invitation for the restoration of fellowship; and that synod urge the Interchurch Relations Committee to use this report in suitable ways for promoting understanding among churches with which the denomination has or had ecumenical ties and for seeking restoration where these ties have been broken.
- Adopted
9. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 28, 29, 30, 31 and Communications 2, 3, and 5.

—Adopted

The following negative vote is registered: George Klungel (Pacific Northwest).

10. The general secretary presents the following motion:

That synod declare that the section regarding "biblical-theological argumentation" in the review committee's report (see *Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 355-73) provides the biblical evidence required to undergird the declaration of Synod 1995 that the perspectives and convictions re women in office articulated in the CRC "honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God."

—*Adopted*

11. That until the review in 2005, synod make provision to have up to seven women from various regions in the CRC serve as advisers to synod.

Grounds:

- a. Women can make a valuable contribution to the work of synod.
- b. The presence and input of ethnic advisers have been beneficial to synod and the churches.

—*Adopted*

12. That synod declare the work of the study committee completed and dismiss it with thanks for its service.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 51

The second clerk presents the following motion:

That synod reconsider the decision not to reveal the vote tally on Recommendation 5 of Advisory Committee 8, majority report.

—*Defeated*

The following negative votes are registered: Elder Roger L. Klok (Kalamazoo), Elder Ronald L. Sportel (Kalamazoo).

ARTICLE 52

The general secretary recognizes Mr. Timothy Norton, executive director of the Lord's Day Alliance.

ARTICLE 53

The morning session is adjourned. Elder Eduardo A. Gonzalez leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, June 15, 2000 Eleventh Session

ARTICLE 54

The president shares with synod the good news received by Rev. Frank E. Pott that his test results for cancer came back negative.

The president introduces Mr. Wayne deJong, CRWRC-U.S. director, and Mr. Andy Ryskamp, CRWRC-Canada director. Mr. Ryskamp leads in opening prayer and reads from Isaiah 58. Mr. deJong and Mr. Ryskamp present the

10. That the trial period for the adjusted Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy be extended until the year 2003.

— *Adopted*

11. That this serves as synod's answer to Overture 15, Overture 16, the CRC Publications Supplement, the CRC Home Missions Appendix, and the Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement.

— *Adopted*

12. That synod thank and dismiss the current study committee.

— *Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 10 is continued in Article 70.)

ARTICLE 56

A delegate presents the following motion:

That synod direct the general secretary to develop and update yearly a list of churches that have approved the ordination of women as elders.

Grounds:

1. This will assist women seminarians, candidates, and pastors in knowing churches where their ministerial calling might be affirmed.
2. This is easily done through an added question in the *Yearbook* questionnaire.

— *Adopted*

ARTICLE 57

The afternoon session is adjourned. Mrs. Eileen Christofferson, prayer intercessor for synod, leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY EVENING, June 15, 2000 Twelfth Session

ARTICLE 58

Rev. Roger Y. Ryu announces *Psalter Hymnal* 428, "O Worship the King," and reads from I Peter 4:11. He leads in opening prayer and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 548, "When We Walk with the Lord."

ARTICLE 59

(The report of Advisory Committee 11 is continued from Article 44.)

Advisory Committee 11, End-of-Life Issues, Rev. Bert Slofstra reporting, presents the following:

Responsibility and Community at the End-of-Life

A. *Material:* Report of the Committee for Contact with the Government (Canada) Regarding Responsibility and Community at the End of Life, pp. 425-48

ARTICLE 68

(The report of Advisory Committee 11 is continued from Article 59.)

Advisory Committee 11, End-of-Life Issues, Rev. Bert Slofstra reporting, presents the following:

Responsibility and Community at the End of Life

A. *Material*: Report of the Committee for Contact with the Government (Canada) Regarding Responsibility and Community at the End of Life, pp. 425-48

B. *Recommendation*

That synod substitute the following wording for Section IV, B of the report of the committee to study end-of-life issues:

The Bible and suicide

In view of the growing demand for the legalization of assisted suicide, an examination of biblical givens may be helpful. The call to be willing to lose one's life in order to save it is mentioned six times in the four gospels (Matt.10:39; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 14:26-27; 17:33; John 12:25). These words of our Lord have prompted many acts of courage and compassion in which individuals were willing to sacrifice their own lives in order to serve others in his name. But such selfless acts of sacrificial love and compassion are not to be confused with the conditions that lead a person to attempt suicide.

Interestingly, the instances of suicide that are mentioned in the Bible do not include *explicit* condemnation of the act (see II Sam. 1:24-25 and II Sam. 2:4-7; also II Sam. 17:23; Judg. 9:52-54; I Kings 16:18-19; Matt. 27:5). This must not be taken to mean, however, that the Bible condones suicide. Scripture clearly prohibits *all* wanton destruction of human life, and that includes the willful ending of one's own life. The Heidelberg Catechism affirms this when it says, in its treatment of the Sixth Commandment, "... I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself, either."

Although the scriptural narratives referred to do not explicitly condemn those who took their own lives, their desperate actions *are* generally associated with lives of disobedience. Again, however, these examples of suicide must not be understood to suggest that depressed or suicidal persons today have, at some point in their lives, chosen to pursue the way of evil. We now know that depression is a serious illness, one that can have fatal consequences. It is of special comfort, therefore, for believers to know that, although the Bible does not condone suicide, our gracious God is certainly able to forgive it.

— *Adopted*

ARTICLE 69

A delegate presents the following motion:

That synod instruct the BOT to develop a process that will assist the churches to discuss the issue of women in office and promote understanding that will lead to a more unified insight into this matter. The BOT will report its proposed process to Synod 2001.

Grounds:

- a. Since 1995 too little public discussion has taken place to bring the church to unified insight into this issue.
- b. The time allowed before the next review of this matter (2005) provides sufficient opportunity for continuing discussion.

—*Defeated*

ARTICLE 70

(The report of Advisory Committee 10 is continued from Article 55.)

Advisory Committee 10, *Alternate Routes to Ministry*, Rev. Kenneth E. Van Wyk reporting, presents the following:

Committee to Examine Alternate Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC

A. Materials

1. Committee to Examine Alternate Routes Being Used to Enter the Ministry in the CRC Report, pp. 271-350
2. CR Home Missions Report – Appendix, pp. 150-56
3. CRC Publications Supplement
4. Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement, Recommendation E, pp. 3-4
5. Overture 15, pp. 489-90
6. Overture 16, pp. 490-93

B. Recommendation

That synod approve the following membership for the Committee to Provide Guidelines for Alternate Routes to Ministry:

Rev. Bruce Ballast
Dr. Gary Bekker
Rev. Shawn Brix
Mr. Ted Charles
Mr. Robert den Dulk, convener
Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn
Rev. Michael Johnson
Mrs. Thea Leunk
Ms. Jill Louters
Rev. Roger Ryu
Mr. Kenneth Vander Horst
Rev. Richard Williams
Dr. David H. Engelhard, *ex officio*

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 71

The general secretary reads letters of greetings received from the Reformed Churches in South Africa–Synod Soutpansberg and the Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria.