

Church Order II

Chair: Jason Ruis

Reporter: Todd Kuperus

Appeal

I. Response to Appeal 2: Neland Ave CRC

A. *Materials: Agenda for Synod 2023, Appeal 2, pp. 622-27*

B. *Introduction*

The council of Neland Avenue CRC submitted an appeal in response to Synod 2022's instruction "to immediately rescind its decision to ordain a deacon in a same sex marriage, thus nullifying this deacon's current term." In its appeal, the council noted that it "does not agree that Neland's decision to ordain a deacon in a same-sex marriage constitutes breaking covenant with the denomination we love." It also noted it "feels a strong covenantal relationship with the CRC" and believes that "God himself is calling this deacon to this holy office."

We carefully reviewed the documents submitted, and invited representatives of Neland and of the *In Loco* Committee to (separately) offer brief verbal presentations and respond to questions from our committee; we are grateful for their sincere and thoughtful responses.

After prayerful deliberation, Committee 8 has determined the following recommendation.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod not sustain Neland Avenue CRC's appeal.

Grounds:

1. Neither the *Church Order*, nor *Acts of Synod 1980*, provide the necessary grounds for Neland's appeal. The Church Order clearly stipulates that only those "who meet the biblical requirements" (*Church Order* Article 3) are eligible to serve as officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church. Thus, while local congregations have the responsibility to elect their own officebearers, they do not have the right to elect anyone who does not meet biblical requirements: "No one is free to decide for oneself or for the church what is and what is not a doctrine confessed in the standards." (*Church Order*, Supplement, 5, A, 3). Synod has the authority to declare the biblical requirements for officebearers.
2. "The Synod of 1980 declared that it is indeed proper according to Reformed Church polity for either classis or synod to intervene in the affairs of a local congregation, if the welfare of that congregation is at stake" (*Acts of Synod*, 1982, p. 55). Synod also has the authority to intervene in a lower assembly if the well-being of the churches in common is at stake (*Church Order*, Article 27-b and 28-b).

3. According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, section V, B, 12, "All other matters may be considered which synod by a majority vote declares acceptable."