

## I. Response to Overtures 23, 25, 26, 30, 31, 34, 67, and Communications 8, 12, 28 (Majority Report)

### A. Materials

1. Overture 67 (*Deferred from 2023*), pp. 388-389
2. Overture 23, pp. 472-474
3. Overture 25, pp. 476-479
4. Overture 26, pp. 479-481
5. Overture 30, pp. 495-497
6. Overture 31, pp. 497-498
7. Overture 33, pp. 501-503
8. Overture 34, pp. 503-505
9. Communication 8, pp. 562-565
10. Communication 12, pp. 583-584
11. Communication 28, Supplement

### B. Background

As a committee, we recognize that recent decisions by Synod have been difficult in many of our churches. One of the ways that has been used to deal with that difficulty is to write public statements that conflict with the confessions of the CRCNA. Previous Synods express our committee's primary desire – namely, a path of repentance and restoration for those churches in public opposition.

By this recommendation, we want to speak with love and faithfulness, in grace and truth.

### C. Recommendations

1. That Synod instructs churches who have made public statements, by their actions or in any form of media, which directly contradict synod's decision on unchastity to repent and to honor their covenant commitments to the CRCNA. Actions demonstrating this repentance would include:
  - A statement to classis indicating repentance.
  - A removal of any public statements, opposed to the teaching of the CRCNA regarding chastity, including materials designed to teach against or otherwise contradict the denomination's position.
  - A commitment to not ordain as officebearers individuals who are in a same-sex marriage, in a same-sex relationship not in keeping with a holy Christian sexual life.
  - A commitment to not publicly instruct against the denomination's position in our "preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living," as we promise in the Covenant for Officebearers.

- A commitment not to recognize same-sex marriage as ecclesiastically valid, either in officiation or any manner of blessing a wedding rite or a baptismal rite (cf. CO Art. 56, 69-c, Supplement, 69-c; HC Q&A 82, 85).
- A commitment that officebearers not serve in any organization designed to specifically advocate against the teachings and confessions of the CRCNA.

*Grounds:*

- a. Our desire is for the restoration of non-compliant churches under the truth of God’s Word and our shared confession (1 John 1:9-10; Gal 6:1).
  - b. When Synod declares an interpretation of a confession that interpretation is “settled and binding.”
2. That after the conclusion of Synod 2024, all office-bearers from churches in non-compliance, by actions or in any form of media, be placed on a limited suspension. That suspension would include a loss of ability to send delegates to classis, synod, the COD or other CRCNA agencies. Officebearers under limited suspension may attend classis with the privilege of the floor but not as a seated delegate.

*Grounds:*

- a. Our desire is for people to be in a place where they can act with integrity.
  - b. Churches who wish to remain in covenant with the CRCNA must follow the expectations of our shared covenant or release the privileges of the covenant.
3. That synod instruct the General Secretary to prioritize the development of resources to help classes and churches navigate the process towards repentance and restoration or towards disaffiliation. These resources and defined process should be in the hands of classes by November 29, 2024.

Churches may continue in the process, provided there is continued momentum towards repentance and restoration through the measurable benchmarks listed in 1.a-e, or towards the disaffiliation process as outlined in the Church Order, Article 38-f. Classis will submit a bi-annual report to the General Secretary and Council of Delegates of the progress made.

This process is intended to be completed in one year from the beginning of the limited suspension. A classis may lengthen the suspension for up to one additional year provided the church is participating in the process. The entire process may not exceed two years.

*Ground:*

- a. We desire to provide a uniform and clear process for all the classes of the CRCNA.
4. If a church refuses to engage the process or prevents the process from moving forward in a timely manner, the classis shall initiate special discipline of the council.

*Grounds:*

- a. We recognize that currently we are not in unity.
- b. We want to take churches at their word when they say that their convictions are settled according to the proper order and discipline of our church confessions (cf. Belgic Confession, Article 32; Church Order 78-84.)
5. If neither restoration nor disaffiliation are completed after the defined limited suspension, classis is to remove the council, revert the church to an emerging status, placing the church under the authority of a neighboring council.

*Grounds*

- a. Synod 1926 asserted the right for ecclesiastical assemblies to take decisive disciplinary action even if the Church Order does not stipulate an exact process of action (Acts of Synod 1926, pp. 329-30). It also made clear that a consistory worthy of discipline had “placed itself outside of the church relationship” (Acts of Synod 1926, p. 139).
- b. Classis Hudson in 1992 recognized that one of the churches in its classis had “broken the bonds of fellowship with the denomination and therefore [had] placed themselves outside the fellowship of the CRCNA” (Acts of Synod 1993, p. 610). Synod itself said that the church that was no longer in fellowship with the denomination would be allowed to participate in synod’s process of appeals if it would “bring itself into conformity with the standards from which it was declared to have deviated” (p. 610)
- c. Although the council’s authority to discipline is original, the CRCNA has long recognized that broader assemblies have delegated authority to discipline narrower assemblies.
6. That this be synod’s response to Overtures 67 (*Deferred from 2023*), 23, 25, 26, 30, 31, 33, 34 and communications 8, 12, 28.

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