

REPORTS ON CHURCH ORDER AND GOVERNANCE

Report of the General Synod Council Serving As the Executive Committee of the General Synod

But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.
Ephesians 4:15-16

The Son of God gathers, preserves and protects the church by his Spirit and his Word (Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 54). The church exists to announce, teach, and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church speaks and it acts. For those of us in the Reformed tradition, the church governs its life and it determines how best to carry out its mission through its assemblies.

God seeks certain characteristics, and the world also watches to see if those characteristics are evident in our life and work together. Our ability to go forth and preach the gospel is the work of our congregations and the denomination. Together we are a body of committed believers in covenant with one another. Christ's mission is enhanced when the Word of God and our love for each other are the foundations for order, discipline, and effectiveness. This reformed understanding of the church and the manner through which we govern our life together is foundational to Our Call.

Our prayer throughout the year and as we meet as a General Synod body is that our unity and attention to governance will glorify God.

The General Synod Council is established by and responsible to the General Synod. It shall act as the executive committee of the General Synod and it shall administer the affairs of the Reformed Church in America between the sessions of the General Synod. It shall implement decisions, policies, and programs of the General Synod through proper channels and agencies. It shall support, strengthen, and coordinate the work of the several commissions, boards, institutions, and agencies of the Reformed Church in America, thus seeking to increase the effectiveness of the mission and witness of the church (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 7, Section 1).

The General Synod Council serves "as the Executive Committee of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, as the Committee of Reference at meetings of the General Synod, and as the Board of Trustees of the General Synod as may be required by law" (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6a).

For a full listing of the responsibilities of the General Synod Council, delegates will want to refer to the Bylaws of the General Synod (*Book of Church Order*, Chapter 3, Part 1, Article 3, Section 6). These bylaws are reprinted in this workbook behind the Index/Orientation tab.

The work of the General Synod Council (GSC) is reported to the General Synod in two ways. First, matters of governance, work the GSC has done in respect to the meeting of the General Synod, matters of its own organization, personnel oversight, and a general overview of the work of the church are reported here. Second, the GSC's oversight of the mission, ministry, and finances of the RCA has been assigned to other advisory committees of the synod. Referrals addressed to the GSC from previous General Synods are dealt with throughout these reports.

Review of Regional Synod Minutes

The General Synod office received and read the 2005 minutes of the regional synods of Albany, Canada, the Far West, the Great Lakes, the Heartlands, Mid-America, the Mid-Atlantic, and New York. The minutes were found to be in order.

Ad Interim Appointments

The following persons served for one or more meetings on the body indicated, based on the ad interim approval of the General Synod Council:

To the General Synod Council:

Elder Patricia J. Mouquin
Rev. Lizbeth Moss

To the Commission on Nominations:

Rev. Santos Rivera

To the board of Reformed Economic Development International, Inc. (REDI):

Rev. Vicente Martinez
Rev. Timothy Overweg

To the Editorial Council of the *Church Herald*:

Rev. Robert Gram
Rev. P. Stephan Sickler

If these members are serving on an ongoing basis, their names are submitted for General Synod approval in the report of the Commission on Nominations.

R-3

To approve the ad interim appointments. (ADOPTED)

GENERAL SYNOD MEETING

Referral of Business

The business of General Synod was assigned to the appropriate committees as presented in the General Synod Workbook.

R-4

To approve the assignment of General Synod's business as presented in the General Synod Workbook. (ADOPTED)

Communion Offering

The president of the General Synod has requested that the mission offerings contributed by participants and guests at the 2006 meeting of the General Synod be used to support the RCA Global Mission Pokot Project in Alale, Kenya.

The Seating of Delegates

The Bylaws of the General Synod require that a classis be current in the payment of its General Synod assessments before its delegates may be seated as members of the General Synod (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 1, Section 1a). The general secretary reported that the Classis of California was not seated because they were not current in their assessment payments as directed by the *Book of Church Order*.

Amendments to the *Book of Church Order*

The General Synod of 2005 adopted and referred to the classes for approval one amendment to the *Book of Church Order*. The amendment is recorded in the 2005 *Minutes of General Synod* as noted.

	Approved	Disapproved
1. Process for a Church to Leave the Denomination	34	8
<i>(MGS 2005, R-31, p. 113).</i>		
<i>(BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7, Section 19 subsections a and b)</i>		

R-5

To declare Amendment 1 to ~~have been approved by the classes for incorporation~~ and that it be incorporated into the 2006 edition of the *Book of Church Order*. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

Reason:

The amended recommendation more accurately reflects the procedure for amendments to the Constitution as set forth in “Rules and Amendments” of the Government of the Reformed Church in America and Disciplinary Procedures (*Book of Church Order*, 2006 edition).

The classes of British Columbia, California, and Florida did not report a vote of the class.

Amendments to the Bylaws of the General Synod and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod in the *Book of Church Order*

The 2005 General Synod approved in first reading for recommendation to the 2006 General Synod the following amendments to the Bylaws of the General Synod and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod:

Change in GSC Bylaws—*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 4 (*MGS 2005*, R-10, pp. 78-79).

Role and Function of GS Commissions—*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6g (*MGS 2005*, R-13, p. 89).

R-6

To declare the above amendments approved by the 2005 General Synod in first reading to be incorporated into the 2006 edition of the Bylaws of the General Synod. (ADOPTED)

Appointment of the General Synod Treasurer and Assistant Secretary

In accordance with its corporate bylaws, the General Synod must annually appoint a treasurer of the General Synod corporation (Corporate Bylaws of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, Article V, Section 5.01).

R-7

To appoint Susan Converse treasurer of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. (ADOPTED)

In accordance with its corporate bylaws, the General Synod may elect or appoint such other officers as the needs of the corporation may from time to time require (Corporate Bylaws of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, Article V, Section 5.01). In order for the Rev. Kenneth Bradsell, director of Operations and Support, to have authority to sign legal documents for the corporation of the General Synod, it is necessary to approve the following recommendation:

R-8

To appoint the Rev. Kenneth Bradsell assistant secretary of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. (ADOPTED)

General Synod 2006 and Beyond

A working group comprised of current and former members of the GSC and staff continued the process begun by other sub-groups and teams following Mission 2000 and the 2000 meeting of General Synod that instructed the officers, the GSC, and the General Synod staff “to consider ways for permanently changing the structure and means of decision-making of General Synod so that biblical discernment and implementation of local and global mission will always receive a priority of time and attention in the agenda” (*MGS 2000*, R-58, p. 297). The group identified some of the core values that underlie the meetings of the General Synod and impact its work, worship, and fellowship. Some values identified by the team are:

- Means of decision-making that enable knowledge, understanding, full insight of issues, and the work of the larger church, building relationship/community.
- Empowerment of everyone.
- Knowing ourselves as sons and daughters of Jesus Christ and recognizing that identity in each other.
- Trust that the Spirit is working in local congregations.
- Trust that the Spirit is working at the General Synod.
- Hospitality.

The team proposed to the GSC five ways it believes the meeting of the synod could be improved beginning in 2006. These changes are being implemented at this meeting and delegates will have opportunity to evaluate the changes to assist the GSC in planning future meetings.

- a. Organize the opening sessions of the General Synod in a manner than can attend to and integrate both the spiritual and organizational life and work of the General Synod.
- b. Utilize the reorganized seating around tables in the plenary sessions to encourage table conversation about the reports being presented and to enable delegates to address these reports in ways that connect to the joys and challenges faced in the settings of local ministry.
- c. Develop an integrated Our Call report for presentation early in the agenda as a means of assuring that delegates are better equipped to understand the whole picture of the RCA’s ministry and mission as carried out through its agencies.
- d. Request the officers and the General Synod office to provide a process in 2006 to permit advisory committees to organize their reports in a manner that places non-controversial business into a “consent agenda” for synod action, and to ask the president to invite “table discussion” of major recommendations prior to plenary debate.
- e. Encourage advisory committees to utilize their capacity to “bundle” similar items such as multiple overtures on an issue or concern in the life of the church; advise synod to place work on an “unfinished business” agenda for further and future deliberation; and refer items to the synod’s commissions and agencies for further work.

General Synod Meeting Locations

At the 2005 meeting the General Synod acted on advice of the executive committee (*MGS 2005*, R-8, p. 62) to establish a rotation schedule that would place the synod on each of the RCA's three college campuses for two consecutive years with a year between each college visit so the assembly could meet in the bounds of other classes. Remaining in one location for two years reduces modestly some of the annual planning and other annual infrastructure costs of an every-year General Synod. The schedule for meetings established in 2005 is:

- 2007 Central College
- 2008 Classis (to be determined)
- 2009-2010 Hope College
- 2011 Classis (to be determined)
- 2012-2013 Northwestern College

At its spring 2006 meeting the General Synod Council revisited the subject of meeting location, and a prior (spring 2005 GSC) discussion and recommendation to consider moving the annual meeting out of June. An increasing number of delegates to synod identify June as an extremely busy month on congregation calendars due to graduations, weddings, confirmations, special "end of program ministry" activities, mission trips, and other summer ministries. Classes are finding it more difficult to identify delegates able to attend the annual assembly.

The General Synod Council requested that the General Synod office develop a plan for review by the 2006 General Synod that would change the annual meeting cycle and place the General Synod meeting not later than the fourth week in January beginning in 2009. The GSC asked that the annual meeting design incorporate learnings from the Mission 2000 event when the General Synod was held in conjunction with a church-wide conference. The new model, as envisioned by the GSC, would incorporate several already organized conferences including events for new church leaders, pastors, and leaders of churches poised to start new congregations; classis and regional clerks conference; chaplains conference; interim pastor's network conference; and the proposed Our Call event. Delegates to synod and conference participants would worship together and share meals and some other activities. The meeting(s) would be held at a conference facility. The written plan for this type of event along with a cost analysis could not be completed in time for inclusion in the General Synod Workbook. It will be available for delegates at the meeting in June. A proposal to change the synod meeting cycle, if desired, will have to be developed within the appropriate advisory committee.

The advisory committee recommended:

R-9

To direct the General Synod Council to develop a plan for a January General Synod meeting time in a southern location for review and approval by the 2007 General Synod. (ADOPTED)

Reasons

1. Potential for cost effectiveness.
2. More study is needed in order to develop the plan.
3. Denominations of similar size have experienced positive results from similar meeting formats.

Report of the Personnel and Evaluation Committee

In compliance with the General Synod Council bylaws as amended at the 2005 General Synod, the Personnel and Evaluation Committee (P&E) is comprised of six members: one member shall be nominated annually by the moderator of GSC, one member shall be nominated annually by the Ministry and Mission Committee of the GSC, and one shall be nominated annually by the Finance and Administration Committee of the GSC. These three members shall be elected annually at the first meeting of members of GSC following the annual meeting of the General Synod. The beginning of the term of membership shall be as provided in the *BCO*. The general secretary shall serve ex-officio and without vote. The final two members shall be nominated by the Commission on Nominations and elected by the General Synod. They shall be confessing members of a local church (as that term is defined in the *BCO*), they shall have demonstrated expertise in the field of human resources, and they need not be members of GSC. They shall serve a four-year term and may be nominated and appointed for a second four-year term. Following their service (whether for two full four-year terms or for any lesser time period), they shall be ineligible for nomination and appointment for two years. The current members are the Rev. Nolan Palsma, chair; the Rev. Scott Brown; Elder Annie Lee Phillips; Elder Carl Ver Beek; Elder David Smith; and Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, ex-officio.

The duties and responsibilities of the P&E Committee as amended at the 2005 General Synod shall include the following:

1. Provide support, counsel, and direction for the RCA general secretary

The committee meets three times a year and provides the aforementioned to the general secretary. This is accomplished through annual evaluations and the monitoring of the general secretary's goals and objectives. During the in-between times of committee meetings, the chair has covenanted with the general secretary to read the "Monday Morning" communiqués on the website and schedule four face-to-face meetings during the year. The chair also receives the general secretary's monthly calendar to pray for him more specifically.

2. Conduct the performance evaluation of the RCA general secretary and report the results thereof to GSC

The annual performance review for the general secretary was completed on March 8, 2006, and was shared with the General Synod Council at its spring meeting. This review is vital in assisting the general secretary for two reasons: 1) to provide an opportunity for the greater church and the staff to offer input into the general secretary's performance and, 2) to measure whether the general secretary's goals and objectives are in line with Our Call, and other responsibilities as assigned to the general secretary of the Reformed Church in America.

In the evaluation, the general secretary is reviewed in three categories with two sub-categories: Dealing with People—leading others and communicating and influencing; Dealing with Job Responsibilities—preventing and solving problems and achieving results; and Dealing with Self-Management—self-understanding and professional demeanor. The results of the evaluations, which were gathered from peers and committee personnel, indicated that the general secretary mostly exceeds expectations in the aforementioned categories. The general secretary continues to be a person of integrity and high moral values, and one who truly loves the Lord Jesus Christ and the mission and ministry of the Reformed Church in America. His ability to communicate "Our Call" and to encourage staff and the church at large to own the vision was one of the highest areas of the performance review. Another area of

strength was the manner in which the general secretary handles himself with diverse groups. From missionaries to the Sultan of Oman, from the China Christian Council delegates to church leaders across the United States, the general secretary truly exhibits the biblical gift of hospitality. The concern, which was voiced to the general secretary, was the prioritization of his responsibilities: life between the road and the office, work and rest, ecumenical and denominational ministries, meetings and reflections. While the committee will help monitor this at subsequent meetings, it was highly recommended that the new executive assistant play a role in balancing the general secretary’s schedule.

3. Advise the general secretary on personnel policy including salary ranges, benefits, the performance review process, and position descriptions

The committee and the general secretary are still living into the new bylaws and discerning what it means to offer advice in personnel matters. While the general secretary and the coordinator of personnel will handle most personnel matters, the committee, in consultation with the general secretary, will monitor the work of personnel to assure that procedures are followed.

Since 1994 the RCA staff salary structure has been based on the average clergy salary of full-time ministers serving in local congregations, which is determined by a survey. The committee decided that this remains the most equitable means of establishing staff salaries. The average clergy salary (most recent survey results—January 2003) is used as the midpoint of level 3B.

For fiscal year 2007 a 3.0 percent cost of living allowance (COLA) and a 0.5 percent allocation for merit increases were approved by the committee and ratified by the GSC.

RCA Salary Structure for FY2007

Average clergy salary, per the 2003 survey, is based on the midpoint of classification 3B inclusive of the cost of living increase.

Classification	Min	Mid	Max	130%
1	102,437	128,045	153,654	166,459
2	81,450	101,811	122,173	132,356
3A	67,458	84,323	101,187	109,620
3B	49,968	62,461	74,953	81,200
4	36,977	46,221	55,466	60,088
5	32,979	41,224	49,469	53,592
6A	24,985	31,231	37,477	40,600
6B	22,486	28,109	33,729	36,539

Overview of the GSC’s Work on Matters of Its Internal Governance and Administration

Since its reorganization in 2003 the General Synod Council has been engaged in an effort to adopt a new internal organizational model that would make it better able to fulfill its responsibilities on behalf of the General Synod. At its first meeting in the fall of 2003 it affirmed two statements:

- a) The GSC is a community of those faithful to Christ—called to provide leadership for the diverse and dispersed assemblies of Christ’s Church that covenant together to be accountable for mission and ministry within the Reformed Church in America.

- b) The GSC will use governance principles consistent with our understanding of reformed polity and modeled after concepts articulated by John Carver in his “policy governance”¹ approach to board leadership.

In 2004, following a directive by the General Synod, GSC members, officers, the general secretary, and staff consulted with the commissions on Church Order and Theology about how the model interfaces, or potentially conflicts with, the RCA’s understanding of polity and governance by delegated assemblies. At the 2005 General Synod the Commission on Church Order presented a written report on behalf of both itself and the Commission on Theology. The report stated in part: “That it is a secular model does not in itself disallow it from use by the church. Our commissions encourage the GSC to explore ways that it might be about its business.” Further on in the same report the commissions noted: “the commissions find nothing that emerges that violates a Reformed understanding that the church is governed by God through the assemblies of the church as they are constituted by the offices of the church” (*MGS 2005*, p. 85).

At its fall 2005 meeting, following further review of the benefits of the model, the GSC determined to move forward with full implementation of the principles for organizing its work according to the “Policy Governance” model. At its March 2006 meeting the GSC received from a working subcommittee that had been appointed by its moderator a draft of initial policy documents sufficient to allow it to begin functioning utilizing the Carver principles. The subcommittee had worked with Miriam Carver to formulate policies that are consistent with the GSC’s multiple responsibilities and its service as an agency of the General Synod, and mindful of RCA theology and polity. The GSC voted to begin operating according to the new policy documents at its June 2006 meeting immediately following General Synod.

Considerable work remains to refine policy documents and to frame the objectives of RCA’s ten-year goal, Our Call, into “ends statements” that can be monitored into the future. The transition will allow the GSC to devote its work to be more consistent and deliberate in its oversight of the mission and ministry of the church; fully involved in strategic thinking and planning for the future; and able to provide more effective means for monitoring ongoing activities of personnel in fulfillment of the goals, objectives, and directives established by the church.

Supervision and Pastoral Care for the Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield

The General Synod of 2005, while in judicial session, took the following action:

To exercise discipline of the Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield by deposing him from the Office of General Synod Professor of Theology and suspending him from the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament (*MGS 2005*, p. 44).

Immediately following the adjournment of the General Synod, the GSC discussed the ongoing responsibility of the General Synod to provide pastoral care for the Rev. Dr. Kansfield and his wife, Mary, in accord with Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 8, Section 6 of the *Book of Church Order*, which states: “The General Synod shall be responsible for the pastoral care of each enrolled professor of theology and the professor’s immediate family.”

¹ Carver, John, *Boards That Make a Difference, A New Design for Leadership in Non-Profit and Public Organizations* (Second Edition), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997.

The GSC understood that while Dr. Kansfield had been deposed from this office, the synod had not dismissed him to a classis as required by the *Book of Church Order* (Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 8, Sections 8 and 9). Therefore, pastoral care and supervision remained responsibilities of the synod for which the synod had made no provision.

The GSC asked its moderator to immediately appoint a pastoral care team that could begin regular contact and visitation with Dr. and Mrs. Kansfield. The GSC appointed Rev. Barbara Fillette (Delaware-Raritan Classis), Rev. Steve Sayer (Orange Classis), and Rev. Thomas Daubenspeck (Wisconsin Classis) and asked that the team arrange to meet quarterly with Dr. Norman and Mary Kansfield for the purpose of providing pastoral care, support, and pastoral supervision on behalf of the General Synod. The team provided to the moderator of the GSC a written review of its meetings. The GSC received periodic oral updates as appropriate.

General Synod officers, GSC members, and members of the synod's Commission on Church Order conferred throughout the summer and fall about the synod's action to depose Dr. Kansfield from the Office of Professor of Theology without taking the required constitutional step of dismissing him to a classis in accord with Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 8, Sections 8 and 9 of the *Book of Church Order*. Section 8 states: "A professor of theology shall continue in office until death, resignation, dismissal from the seminary, declaration by the General Synod as professor emeritus, or removal from office by the General Synod." Section 9 states: "When a professor of theology resigns from the office elected to by the General Synod, or is no longer in full-time service at a Reformed Church seminary, the professor shall receive a certificate of dismissal from the General Synod to a classis or other ecclesiastical body, unless declared a professor emeritus." In summary, only professors of theology can be amenable to the General Synod and Dr. Kansfield no longer holds this office.

The General Synod's officers, GSC members, and representatives of the synod's Commission on Church Order agreed that the actions of the 2005 synod left both Dr. Kansfield and the General Synod in a quandary because the General Synod has no constitutional authority to supervise a minister of Word and sacrament. All ordained ministers of Word and sacrament are amenable solely to a classis (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12).

The GSC, in its role as the synod's executive committee, was strongly urged to find a constitutional means to allow Dr. Kansfield to be dismissed to his classis of residence because he was no longer a General Synod professor of theology, and out of concern that the General Synod is not properly constituted to carry out supervision, care, or oversight for a minister of Word and sacrament, particularly when the minister is under discipline. Further, the GSC was urged to do this in a manner that did not undermine the discipline imposed by the 2005 General Synod nor the requirements in the order for restoration to office which state: "A person who has been suspended or deposed from office may be restored to office upon repentance and renewal of vows before the judicatory which suspended or deposed that person, provided that the judicatory is satisfied that the honor of the office will not be impaired and that the welfare of the church will be served by such restoration, and provided that the restoration is approved by a two-thirds vote of those present at the meeting of the judicatory. Restoration after deposition shall include reordination to office" (*BCO*, Chapter 2, Part I, Article 6, Section 2).

The need for the synod to consider a remedy to last year's actions, it was noted, is a matter of even greater concern because suspension, by definition, presumes ongoing pastoral efforts to seek restoration of the one suspended. While General Synod is defined as a "permanent, continuing body," its membership changes annually. Pastoral care, oversight, and supervision, particularly supervision of one under suspension, are accomplished best in a classis setting where there is the possibility for ongoing relationship because the member-

ship of the classis itself continues and those providing the care and supervision are in geographic proximity allowing for regular contact.

Dr. Kansfield was informed in February by representatives of the GSC of their recognition that the church order requirement that he be dismissed to a classis (Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 8, Section 9) and the assumption in Chapter 2, Part I, Article 6, Section 2 that a person suspended must remain amenable to the judicatory that voted to suspend was an unintended anomaly not foreseen by the writers of these sections of the order. Dr. Kansfield was told that the GSC was preparing to request the General Synod to remedy the matter by proposing dismissal to his classis of residence under suspension. Dr. Kansfield indicated his understanding and agreed to not object to being placed under classis care. Dr. Kansfield also stated that based on the commitment of the GSC and the synod's officers to propose and support this remedy he would forgo his right to a new trial, as provided in Chapter 2, Part I, Article 3, Section 4b of the *Book of Church Order*, at the 2006 meeting of the General Synod. Dr. Kansfield, through his attorney, Mr. William Rupp, had filed a written request for a new trial with the General Synod office on January 23, 2006.

Following extended deliberation at its March 2006 meeting the GSC voted unanimously to forward to the General Synod for its consideration the following recommendation, which had been reviewed in advance by representatives of the synod's Commission on Church Order and the RCA's legal counsel. By authorizing the Classis of Orange to act "on behalf of the General Synod," in effect as the synod's agent, the General Synod will provide a remedy that overcomes the anomaly in the order that has left synod "holding" Dr. Kansfield's amenability, and will also protect the intent of the 2005 synod to impose suspension that creates a high bar for restoration.

The advisory committee recommended an amendment:

R-10

To dismiss the Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield, under suspension, to the Classis of Orange in order that pastoral care may be exercised; and further,

to grant authority to the Classis of Orange to act on behalf of the General Synod in accord with Chapter 2, Part I, Article 6, Section 2 of the *Book of Church Order*²; and further,

to request that the Classis of Orange inform the General Synod of any change in the status as a minister of Word and sacrament of the Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield. (ADOPTED AS AMENDED)

² *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 2, Part I, Article 6, "Restoration and Reinstatement," Section 2 states, "A person who has been suspended or deposed from office may be restored to office upon repentance and renewal of vows before the judicatory which suspended or deposed that person, provided that the judicatory is satisfied that the honor of the office will not be impaired and that the welfare of the church will be served by such restoration, and provided that the restoration is approved by a two-thirds vote of those present at the meeting of the judicatory. Restoration after deposition shall include reordination to office."

The advisory committee offered a new recommendation:

R-11

To communicate to the Classis of Orange the actions of the 2005 General Synod concerning the Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield; and further,

to instruct the General Synod Council to offer financial assistance to the Classis of Orange for extraordinary expenses incurred in the supervision of the Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. So that there is clarity surrounding the reason for the suspension from the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament.
2. Synod's action on R-10 may create a financial burden on the classis.

Transfer of Christ's Community Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana

The General Synod Council received correspondence from the consistory of Christ's Community Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, requesting transfer from the Classis of South Grand Rapids in the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes to the Classis of Illiana in the Regional Synod of Mid-America. Correspondence was also received by the GSC from the two affected classes and the regional synods supporting the transfer. The GSC reviewed the request at its March 2006 meeting and recommends to the General Synod that the transfer be approved.

R-12

To transfer Christ's Community Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, from the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes, Classis of South Grand Rapids, to the Regional Synod of Mid-America, Classis of Illiana. (ADOPTED)

Real Estate Management

During the 2005-2006 year the General Synod Council concluded its lease on space in Hinsdale, Illinois. Functions of the RCA Foundation were transferred to the RCA's Grand Rapids, Michigan, office. Remaining work carried out on behalf of the Board of Benefits Services was transferred to the RCA's Interchurch Center office in New York. Global Mission transferred its staff in Hinsdale to space provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its offices near O'Hare airport in Chicago, Illinois.

In the summer of 2005 the GSC completed a modest renovation of its offices in Grand Rapids to accommodate increased staff capacity in that location. The renovation involved creating office space in the former warehouse area previously utilized by the RCA Distribution Center.

At its March 2006 meeting the GSC encouraged staff to move ahead with the long desired transfer of Kirkside of Roxbury, a nursing home in Roxbury, New York, to an independent board that includes a majority of members from Jay Gould Memorial Reformed Church in Roxbury. The home has been managed by the board for many years and is located on a campus with the church buildings.

Reformed Church Press

Reformed Church Press (RCP) is organized as a separate corporate entity of the General

Synod. However, for more than a decade it has functioned under the oversight of the General Synod Council. It provides the means for the RCA to continue to produce selected resources to support specific RCA mission and ministry in fulfillment of the Statement of Mission and Vision and Our Call. It is the imprint used on all RCA-produced materials including books, General Synod documents, promotional and communication vehicles, and *Perspectives* (a theological journal). RCP was operated as part of the RCA Distribution Center, TRAVARCA, and print and audio visual services until these entities were separated a couple of years ago. As reported below, the RCA Distribution Center and TRAVARCA have been closed. As a result, RCP, functioning only as a publishing vehicle, was able to return revenue in 2005 for the first time in many years. The funds are used by the GSC to support the continued development of selective materials required by all of its ministry and mission areas.

Faith Alive Christian Resources Partnership

A recent review of Faith Alive Christian Resources reports indicates strong sales in all regions of the RCA. A customer satisfaction survey taken in early 2006 showed overwhelming acceptance and satisfaction with the partnership. The management team of the RCA continues to meet regularly with Faith Alive leadership to ensure the partnership is both working well and meeting the needs of both the RCA and CRC. Staff cooperation between Faith Alive and the RCA is strong. The RCA receives 5 percent of the revenue from sales to RCA congregations, agencies, and individuals and 100 percent of the revenue from sales of RCA-produced material (minus an annual shelving cost and actual shipping expenses). This revenue has proven invaluable as we look to keep RCA material both updated and in print.

TRAVARCA Closure

TRAVARCA, the video tape and DVD loan library for congregations, institutions, and agencies of the RCA and the CRC that was operated by the GSC, began in the 1960s as an audio tape and film strip library. It was transformed over the years to a film service and finally a video-tape library inclusive of print study resources in the 1980s. In recent years, membership had fallen dramatically and the program lost money consistently. Since 2003 GSC staff, outside consultants, and personnel from Faith Alive Christian Resources (CRC Publications) explored various options for repositioning the service so it could support the church through the use of new and emerging technologies. The required investment of personnel, current financial resources, and new capital exceeded the resources that the RCA and the CRC felt could be invested wisely. It was also noted that other Christian organizations are providing visual media support for churches at lower cost than the RCA, the CRC, or the Faith Alive partnership could offer these services. Therefore, the library was closed on December 31, 2005. The inventory was made available first to former TRAVARCA member churches and later to all congregations and agencies of the RCA and the CRC. Many of the more popular videos and DVDs are now available for purchase through the RCA's Faith Alive distributor.

Risk Management

The GSC's risk management subcommittee met throughout 2005 to fulfill its duties, which include identification of risks for the RCA, evaluation and prioritizing of the risks and their potential impact, a strategy for managing major risks, and ensuring that staff is equipped to meet risk management responsibilities. A risk management plan was presented to and approved by the GSC in March 2006.

Information Technology

The GSC's Information Technology department was fully staffed in 2005 for the first time in two years. Numerous projects to support increased use of technology in all areas of ministry are carried out from both the church's Grand Rapids and New York offices where the staff are based.

In late 2005 the General Synod office was able to make available to classes and congregations for the first time the Consistorial Report form in an electronic format. About one-third of the RCA's congregations responded electronically in early 2006. Electronic filing of the form facilitates faster processing of the information at less cost due primarily to a reduction in staff time allocated to the project.

The department is also involved in the full deployment of new software called "NetCommunity" that will provide significant enhancements to the RCA's website, provide better support to the Development and Finance office staffs, allow more interactive use of computers with constituents throughout the church, enhance meeting planning including the use of online registration for events (such as synod), and provide several other efficiencies in the oversight and support of RCA mission and ministry.

The department is working closely with the Board of Benefits Services to transition the insurance billing operations. When completed later in 2006 the project will enhance service, improve records management for the department, and reduce costs.

Records Retention and Archives

The RCA Archives exists to serve as the memory of the church. The corporate memory of what we have done and who we have been constitutes our heritage—a journey of 378 years seeking to serve faithfully our Lord in mission throughout the world. Since a strong future is built upon a solid understanding of the past, the RCA Archives preserves records from congregations, classes, regional synods, the General Synod, and staff offices in order to document how we have followed the call to mission.

The primary responsibility of the archivist is to provide support and assistance on records management issues to the General Synod's agencies, institutions, committees, and commissions, as well as to congregations and staff offices. The archivist has to make decisions about what should be kept and what may be disposed of without serious consequence so that a faithful record exists of who we are and what we have been about. The archivist also visits congregations to assist them with their record-keeping tasks.

The archivist has an active volunteer program through RCA Volunteer Services. Volunteers Ernie and Marlene Bruns returned for their fourth time and spent three weeks working in the archives in the fall. Diana Weiss volunteers a day a week to assist with data entry and the development of an extensive bibliography of RCA ministers' writings and sermons. The archives also stores records at Countryside Camp in Cambridge, Ontario. John Drost and his wife, Joan, continue to serve the church in Canada as they collect and preserve the documentary memory of that part of our denomination.

The archives also provides opportunities for interns interested in pursuing archival work as a career. This summer Christopher Postma completed an internship experience as part of his degree program at Concordia College.

One of the strengths of an effective archival program is related to the establishment of new congregations. The office provides these churches with a CD that contains historical documents and pictures. This resource offers the newest RCA congregations an opportunity to

explore the RCA's shared heritage and to know who we are as a community of faith as we discover who we can become.

The GSC recognizes the importance of its archives services as a "ministry of memory" as it continues in its stewardship of the RCA's shared heritage. Preserving our memory is an important task so that we can assure that tomorrow has a yesterday. It is also a process of thanksgiving as we grow out of yesterday into tomorrow.

Resolutions

During 2005 and 2006 the General Synod Council recognized the retirements of staff members who together have given almost a century of dedicated service to the ministry and mission of the Reformed Church in America.

The GSC extends its gratitude to Dorothy Schmidt, Joanne Fernandez, Henry David, and Willa Brown.

Dorothy Schmidt, who has been a member of GSC staff for the past twenty years, will retire at the end of June. Dorothy managed the RCA Distribution Center for eighteen years, gave tirelessly to assist the RCA in the closure of the distribution center in 2004, the sale of inventory, the merger of this service into the new partnership with the Christian Reformed Church (Faith Alive Christian Resources), and the 2005 closure of TRAVARCA. Since 2004 Dorothy has managed the RCA's mailroom operations and the RCP warehouse, overseen inventory, and served as the RCA's liaison with the Faith Alive distribution services. The GSC adopted the following resolution honoring Dorothy:

Be it resolved that the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Chicago, Illinois, on the 22nd day of March 2006, offers thanks to God for years of competent and faithful service to the ministries of the Reformed Church in America by Dorothy Schmidt, who has served the church through her careful and tireless management of the former RCA Distribution Center and TRAVARCA, her diligence in overseeing the transformation of these RCA services to better meet the mission and vision of the church in the new century, and her gracious care of those she supervised; and,

be it further resolved that the General Synod Council invites the delegates and guests of the 200th regular session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America to join it in expressing to Dorothy gratitude, admiration, affection, and prayers for years of health and joy in continuing service to Christ and his church.

Joanne Fernandez, who will conclude her service when she retires at the end of June this year, began her work for the RCA in 1968 as the administrative assistant to the Rev. Edwin Luidens in the World Mission department. At its March meeting the General Synod Council adopted the following resolution as one means of expressing the RCA's thanks to Joanne for her deep love for the church and her years of dedicated service:

Be it resolved that the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Chicago, Illinois, on the 22nd day of March 2006, offers thanks to God for years of competent and faithful service to the ministries of the Reformed Church in America by Joanne Fernandez, who has lived out a ministry of hospitality and care for those of the church she has been called upon to serve, who has faithfully lived out her calling and ordination as an elder in her congregation and in the wider church, and whose commitment to fairness, careful stewardship of the church's resources, and diligence in overseeing the annual meetings of the General Synod and the meetings of the General Synod Council, commissions, and agencies of the church has left enduring marks on staff colleagues past and present, officeholders, delegates, visitors, friends, and guests of the church; and

be it further resolved that the General Synod Council invites the delegates and guests of the 200th regular session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America to join it in expressing to Joanne gratitude, admiration, affection, and prayers for years of health and joy in continuing service to Christ and his church.

Henry David, a member of GSC staff for the past thirty years, retired at the end of December 2005. Henry served as an accountant in Finance Services and was widely respected for his commitment to excellence and his attention to the needs of staff colleagues, particularly missionaries. At its spring 2006 meeting, the General Synod Council adopted the following resolution honoring Henry:

Be it resolved that the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Chicago, Illinois, on the 22nd day of March 2006, offers thanks to God for the many years of dedicated and faithful service to the ministries of the Reformed Church in America by Henry David. Henry came to us as a refugee from the High Hope School, an American mission school founded in Basra, Iraq, by the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church. In the thirty years that Henry served in the Finance Services Office, he has graced us with his competent service, kind nature, and compassion for all God's children. Henry's loyalty, commitment to excellence, diligent oversight of the funds that have been entrusted to the church, and unfettered generosity of spirit have left a lasting affect on all whom he has served, including staff colleagues, missionaries, and members of the Reformed Church in America; and

be it further resolved that the General Synod Council invites the delegates and guests of the 200th regular session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America to join it in expressing to Henry gratitude, admiration, affection, and prayers for years of health and joy in continuing service to Christ and his church.

Long before Willa Brown began formal staff service with the Reformed Church in America, she was serving the church through the educational ministries of her local congregation. She was first hired by the RCA as a curriculum editor, working with the Christian Reformed Church in North America in the early 1990s on the development of Living in Faith Everyday (LiFE), an innovative new Reformed curriculum for children. In 1994, she became the RCA's first associate for children's ministry, a position she held until her retirement at the end of 2005. The GSC adopted the following resolution concerning Willa:

Be it resolved that the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Chicago, Illinois, on the 22nd day of March 2006, offers thanks to God for the witness and service of Willa Brown, who responded to God's call to discipleship by committing her energy and gifts to the faith formation of children in the RCA and beyond, first through the editing of curriculum and then in twelve years of faithful service to the Reformed Church in America as its associate for children's ministry, providing careful leadership to its efforts to equip congregations, resource leaders, and encourage teachers across our church; and, with a deep and passionate knowledge of how children learn and grow, also promoted and supported the Children and Worship program both in our own congregations and abroad, to the point of facilitating translations of material into other languages; and

be it further resolved that the General Synod Council invites the delegates and guests of the 200th regular session of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America to join it in expressing to Willa gratitude, admiration, affection, and prayers for years of health and joy in continuing service to Christ and his church.

**PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF THE STATISTICAL REPORT
OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 12/31/2005**

	2003	2004	2005	2004-2005 Increase or (Decrease)
1 Churches	938	935	934	(1)
2 Church Households	108,552	106,887	106,823	(64)
3 Confessing Members	172,613	170,592	168,542	(2,050)
4 Inactive Members	39,747	39,508	38,986	(522)
5 Baptized Members	72,160	72,014	67,955	(4,059)
6 Total Membership	284,520	282,114	275,483	(6,631)
7 Adherents	45,965	47,323	46,383	(940)
8 Average Worship Attendance	175	174	172	(2)
9 Received on Confession	7,732	7,484	7,179	(305)
10 Received on Certificate	3,763	3,759	3,544	(215)
11 Transferred	3,610	3,690	3,405	(285)
12 Deceased	2,758	2,738	2,693	(45)
13 Other Removals from Roll	5,702	6,003	8,089	2,086
14 Infants Baptized	3,624	3,516	3,572	56
15 Adults Baptized	1,434	1,354	1,385	31
19a RCA Assessments	\$11,401,248	\$11,809,191	\$12,085,457	\$276,266
19b RCA Contributions	\$13,893,094	\$13,535,133	\$14,315,784	\$780,651
19c Other Contributions	\$15,421,648	\$15,609,423	\$18,351,215	\$2,741,792
20 Congregation Purposes	\$239,206,878	\$261,333,580	\$278,719,994	\$17,386,414
TOTAL	\$279,922,868	\$302,287,327	\$323,472,450	\$21,185,123

Church Plants with a Denominational Plan

50 church plants have an average worship attendance of 82.

Organized/Received/Adopted

Celebrate Community Church, Knoxville, Iowa (1/05) Classis of Central Iowa
 Spring Valley Community Church, Allendale, Michigan (1/05) Classis of Zeeland
 Abundant Mission Church, Los Angeles, California (3/05) Classis of California
 Da Som Korean Church, Long Beach, California (3/05) Classis of California
 New Life Community Church, Tulare, California (6/05) Classis of Central California
 The Bridge, Chino, California (7/05) Classis of California
 Open Door Fellowship, Corsica, South Dakota (7/05) Classis of Dakota

Disbanded/Released

Minnesota Valley Community Church, Prior Lake, Minnesota (3/05) Classis of Minnesota
 Peace Reformed Church, Mount Prospect, Illinois (7/05) Classis of Chicago
 Hope Reformed Church, Carrollton, Texas (9/05) Classis of Central Iowa
 Christ Community Church, Dallas, Texas (9/05) Classis of Central Iowa
 Christ Church of the Bay Area, San Mateo, California (11/05) Classis of Central California
 Fourth Reformed Church, Somerville, New Jersey (12/05) Classis of Delaware-Raritan
 Union Reformed Church of Highbridge, Bronx, New York (12/05) Classis of New York

Merged

Oasis Community Church, Victorville, California, and Crosswinds Community Church, Hesperia, California, became Oasis Church, Hesperia, California (10/05) Classis of California

Report of the Commission on Church Order

The Commission on Church Order held its fall meeting on October 21-23, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois, and its winter meeting on January 20-21, 2006, at Rutgers University Inn and Conference Center in New Brunswick, New Jersey. In addition, it held a number of conference calls in response to requests for interpretation of the *Book of Church Order*.

A Clarifying Interpretation Concerning the Admissibility of Overtures

The 2005 General Synod voted:

To direct the Commission on Church Order to provide a clarifying interpretation of the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 3, Part II, Article 2, Section 7, especially the second sentence in that section which currently reads "It [i.e., the General Synod] shall not receive overtures which deal with matters under adjudication or which make either direct or implied charges against persons" (*MGS 2005*, R-17, p. 97).

The context of this motion was an appeal from the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance which requested a ruling from the chair on the admissibility of overtures concerning homosexuality in a synod that held a judicial process that had as part of its content the General Synod's policy on homosexuality. The overtures were ruled acceptable and the ruling of the chair was upheld by the synod (*MGS 2005*, p. 97).

This commission responded to the request in a communication to the General Synod Council in its role as the executive committee of the General Synod:

There are two matters present in this prescription [i.e., Section 7]. The first has to do with who would make the decision that an overture is to be disqualified. In our opinion the GSC as the executive committee would be responsible for those decisions.

The second matter is a bit trickier. We see no way that a clear line can be drawn on this matter. Overtures would have to be considered on a case by case basis.

What is to be judged is to what extent consideration of the overture would taint potential jurists. Delegates appropriately would come having considered issues brought by the overtures. But a judicial case would ask them to consider its issue on the basis of either evidence or argument brought by the parties and/or the judicial business commission. Often judicial matters turn on points not considered prior to the argument of counsel and/or commission.

It should be clear that when an overture is ruled out of order at the current synod, that does not mean that the synod cannot consider it at a later session.

This commission also notes that the timing of the production of the workbook for the synod is relevant. It is not always clear whether a judicial matter will in fact be before the synod until after the workbook has been printed and sent. But it is possible to withhold

overtures from the workbook until a determination has been made on whether a judicial process will in fact be before the synod.

Covenanted Financial Commitments

The 2005 General Synod voted:

To instruct the Commission on Church Order to propose an appropriate means for assemblies to respond to those who by their actions break their covenanted financial commitments with the rest of the body, for report to the 2006 General Synod (*MGS 2005*, R-35, p. 116).

It was the withholding of assessments (and the threat thereof) by classes in their commitment to the General Synod that precipitated this request to our commission. It was clear to this commission that the financial action is a symptom of a deeper rift. There are, of course, consequences in the church order for classes that do not pay their assessments. The General Synod need not seat the delegates of that classis at the meeting of the General Synod. By itself, however, such action does little to remedy the deeper dissatisfaction that brought about the withholding of assessments.

For that reason, this commission cannot respond to the request from the synod by proposing changes to the church order. The issue is larger than the church order and goes to the fundamental reality of the mutual relation among the local churches, classes, and synods. Until underlying issues are addressed, existing or proposed sanctions in the church order will have little if any effect.

The commission offers a means that can be used in the mutual engagement between assemblies where one party breaks its covenanted financial commitment. This process may be helpful. In the following the parties are identified as follows. The “breaching” party is that body that has broken financial commitments. The “breached” party is the assembly to which the financial obligation is due.

1. The breached party shall contact the breaching party to determine whether the break in financial commitment is due to lack of ability to pay. If so, the process already in place to assist classes and churches with assessment relief will be identified and utilized.
2. If the breach is an intentional withholding of assessments the parties shall enter the following process:
 - The executive committees of both parties will agree to a time of prayer and meditation that shall last at least seven days. Members of each committee are encouraged to set aside at least one half hour each day for this time.
 - Following that time, the executive committees of each body shall designate a delegation of no less than three persons to meet at a facility in the location of the breaching party. That meeting is to take place within seven weeks following the determination that the break was intentional. The parties will commit to meet together for a period of not less than seven hours. That time shall include prayers and meditation and shall also include at least one meal. The parties shall discuss how the breach occurred and how it is to be cured. They shall also report on the ongoing work and task of each party.
3. If following this time, the breach remains, the consequences outlined in the church order may come into effect. That includes the refusal to seat the delegates of the offending assembly at the greater assembly of which it is a lesser assembly.

This commission realizes that the refusal to seat delegates may be a meaningless consequence when the rift between assemblies has reached this point. However, more serious consequences may follow. If it is a classis in breach of its commitment to the General Synod, for example, those consequences may include:

- The General Synod Council could instruct the general secretary and staff to cease the provision of services to the offending classis and its churches.
- The General Synod could terminate the membership of persons from the offending classis on commissions, boards, and agencies of the Reformed Church.
- The General Synod Council could instruct the Office for Ministry Services to cease assistance to ministers in the offending classis in their search for new employment and to cease assistance to churches in the offending classis in their search for new ministers.
- The General Synod could begin to transfer churches in the offending classis to a new regional synod.

Such measures are both unpalatable and draconian. They indicate, however, how serious the breach is and how it threatens the very nature and existence of the Reformed Church as a church. For at issue is the very covenantal nature of the existence of the General Synod.

The kind of breach that threatens in the instance before us is not the only symptom of the strains on the church, however. In the question of full participation in the insurances, also before this commission, the church is faced with similar tensions. Again the question has to do with how we live together. Nor are these the only signs of the fragility of our common existence. When classes refuse to accept the attestation of the credentials of ministers of Word and sacrament and when something other than the Standards of Unity become the criteria for acknowledging our common life, we have parts of the church deciding to live in separation. What some have identified as “selective schism” threatens the existence of the church.

The underlying issue is, then, deeper or greater than the church order itself. It has to do with the very nature of what holds us together as a church. It is not clear what the road is that is to be traveled. In fact, it is beyond the authority and competence of this commission to suggest what that might be. This commission can, however, propose a “means.”

It suggests that the General Synod authorize a convocation of persons from among the classes and the General Synod who would be given sufficient time and space to work through the underlying issues of what holds us together as a church. Such a convocation would require all sections of the church to be represented in order that distrust and anxiety could be clearly expressed and worked through. This needs prayerful time. Further, we strongly urge that this be done without staff presence (staff from general or regional synods, or from classes). The RCA is deeply indebted to our staff, but as a matter of church order, they do not set the direction of the church.

There may be significant cost to such a proposal. However, the gravity of the situation is such that not to take such an initiative would cost the church significantly more. Indeed, if the very existence of the church is in question, cost can not be prohibitive.

The Commission on Church Order offered a recommendation that was amended by the advisory committee:

R-13

That the General Synod convene an ad hoc committee of nineteen persons (two to be selected by the General Synod delegates of each

regional synod and three to be selected by the General Synod Council—none of which shall be paid staff to any synod or classis) to meet at times and places of their own choosing to explore ~~determine~~ the nature and extent of the ~~continuing~~ relation among the classes, regional synods, and General Synod; and further,

that the ad hoc committee receive sufficient funding to consult with any persons they deem crucial to their task; and further,

to report annually to the General Synod, its final report being no later than General Synod 2009.

Reasons:

1. The amendment serves to focus on deepening trust and promoting unity within the RCA.
2. It is important to begin this process immediately.

The synod voted to adopt R-13 as amended, but later reconsidered its action.

The Committee of Reference reported through its moderator that further clarification regarding R-13 amended was needed. A motion was made from the floor to reconsider R-13. The General Synod:

VOTED: To reconsider R-13 from the report of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance.

The following substitute recommendation was presented to the house by the Committee of Reference:

R-14

To instruct the officers of the General Synod Council to appoint up to three members from the General Synod Council (GSC) and to request the elected officers of the regional synods to appoint up to two delegates—none of which shall be paid staff to any synod or classis—to meet at times and places of their own choosing to explore the nature and extent of the relation among the classes, regional synods, and General Synod; and further,

That the ad hoc committee receive sufficient funding to consult with any persons they deem crucial to their task; and further,

To report annually to the General Synod, its final report being no later than General Synod 2009. (ADOPTED)

[Budget implications: \$25,000 per year for three years, a \$.15 per member assessment adjustment.]

Commissioned Pastors

The 2005 General Synod voted:

To instruct the Commission on Church Order to develop an amendment to the *Book of Church Order* that implements the intention of overture 3, for report to the General Synod of 2006 (*MGS 2005*, R-84, p. 298).

(Overture 3 reads: “The Classis of West Sioux overtures General Synod to amend the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 14, Section 2, to read: A consistory

may recommend an elder or a person with gifts for and a heart set upon the office of elder to the classis as a candidate to become a commissioned pastor.”)

The synod was presented with a purported problem with the time required for preparation for a commissioned pastor. Article 14 outlines a procedure that may take a number of years in preparation before a person may become commissioned. If a person must be an elder before she or he is presented as a candidate, this eliminates persons who might become an elder in the meantime. The intent of the amendment is to identify such persons and allow them into the system of preparation. The requirement to be an elder to become a commissioned pastor would remain.

However, just such “early identification” is itself a problem from the perspective of church order. The commissioned pastor is tied to the notion of office. Office is conferred by ordination, and ordination to the office of elder presumes election by a congregation. For that reason neither a person’s gifts nor personal desire by themselves can identify “future elders” (or deacons).

The proposal also raises the specter of persons who intend to be ordained elder *in order that* he or she may become a commissioned pastor. The goal is commissioned pastor; the means to the goal is to be ordained elder. But that, too, is a violation of a Reformed understanding of office, particularly of the office of elder. It devalues that office to that of “second-class.” Furthermore, it imports an episcopal understanding of office whereby one is ordained to an office “on the way” to a so-called “higher” office.

Some may argue that this makes the route to commissioned pastor more difficult. That difficulty is in fact intended. Commissioned pastors are an exception in the order, and not the rule.

The cleanest way for the order to accommodate the proposed change is to replace the term “elder” in Section 2 with the words “a member of a Reformed church.” This would mean that a person may enter the system with no guarantee of being ordained an elder. In that case, it would be parallel to the case of candidates to the ministry of Word and sacrament. Candidates have no assurance that they will be ordained at the end of their preparation.

R-15

To adopt the following amendment to the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 14, Section 2, for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions are underlined, deletions stricken out):

Chapter 1, Part II, Article 14

Sec. 2. A consistory may recommend an elder a confessing member of a Reformed church to the classis as a candidate to become a commissioned pastor. (ADOPTED)

Full Participation in the Insurance Plan

The Board of Benefit Services (BOBS) brought to the 2005 General Synod a plan to change the church order to help enforce the provision of the call form that requires all ministers to participate in the Reformed Church pension and insurance plans (Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 3). Two proposals were put before the synod. One would have the General Synod refuse to seat the delegates of a classis with less than 100 percent compliance in the insurance plan. A second proposal would direct the Commission on Nominations to no longer nominate into membership of an institution, commission, or

agency of the General Synod any member of any church that is not in compliance with the insurance requirement. Both proposals were referred to the Commission on Church Order (*MGS 2005*, pp. 186-188).

While recognizing the difficulty in enforcing provisions of the church order, this commission declines to put forth the proposals referred to it by the 2005 General Synod for the following reasons:

1. It is not clear how the matter can be audited for all ministers and all churches. And since the compliance requirement is 100 percent, any deviation will require the synod to refuse to seat an entire classis at the General Synod.
2. The provision that every classis be fully compliant exposes the church to a danger too high to bear. Since it takes only one church in each classis to disallow the participation of that classis in the General Synod, the specter rises of a General Synod with a significant number of classes absent. In our opinion, in such a case the church would have a synod in name only. Furthermore, since the requirement is full compliance, any one church can hold a classis hostage to its recalcitrance, however principally intended.
3. It is the opinion of this commission that the issue of *non-participation* is but one of a larger set of issues that currently are before the church and that give cause for concern for the relation between the classes, the synods, and the General Synod. Comment is made on that in another part of this report (see “Covenanted Financial Commitments”).
4. The provision that members of churches that are not compliant not be nominated to commissions, institutions, and agencies seems punitive on its face. It is the judgment of this commission that a punitive intention is not sufficient motivation to change the church order.
5. Furthermore, the instruction that members of congregations be refused opportunity to serve in fact is more injurious to the synod than to any one individual. It is the synod that lives by the gifts of its members. No member is harmed by such refusal.

It is to be repeated and noted clearly that the church order now requires that all calls executed must meet the requirements set forth in Formulary #5 (the “call form”) for all ministers, including ministers employed by an assembly, institution, or agency of the Reformed Church in America.

The Belhar Confession

For a number of years the General Synod has engaged in continuing discussions of the Belhar Confession under the direction of the Commission on Christian Unity. Discussions have included the opening of the possibility to include the Belhar as one of the official confessions of the Reformed Church.

This commission noted early on that the church order makes no provision for adding (nor for amending) Standards to the Constitution (recalling that the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America consists of “the Doctrinal Standards (which are the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism with its Compendium, and the Canons of the Synod of Dort), the Liturgy with the Directory for Worship, the Government of the Reformed Church in America, and the Disciplinary and Judicial Procedures”). For that reason, the General Synod operates in a vacuum. This commission deliberated on a process that would be in keeping with the history and order of the Reformed Church.

The method recommended to the synod would be the adoption of the confession as a “provisional standard.” This has been the church’s practice in the past (see the report of the Commission on History, *MGS 2005*, pp. 148-156). This would raise the level of acceptance

beyond that of a change to the church order. It would give the church time to live with the confession. It could use the confession in worship and in teaching. The commission cautions, however, that as provisional it should not be used for disciplinary purposes; the church is still “trying it on.”

This commission, then, recommended the following process to the General Synod Council in its function as the executive committee of the synod:

1. Should the Commission on Christian Unity deem it advisable, it would recommend to the General Synod that it adopt the Belhar Confession as a provisional standard for a period of five years.
2. The General Synod, through one or more of its commissions, would evaluate the reception of the Belhar Confession in the church.
3. If, following the five-year period, the General Synod deems it appropriate, it would vote to add the Belhar Confession to the list of Doctrinal Standards in the Preamble of the *Book of Church Order* and that action would be sent to the classes for ratification.

Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers with the Christian Reformed Church

The 2005 General Synod received a report from its Commission on Christian Unity that included a proposal for the “Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers between the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in America (*MGS 2005*, pp. 255-259). The synod then voted to adopt the document and to refer it to the Commission on Church Order to “recommend required changes to the *Book of Church Order* to General Synod of 2006” (*MGS 2005*, R-76, p. 259).

The provision to call ministers of another denomination within the category of what is called “orderly exchange” has been Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 4 in which the consistory is granted permission heretofore to call ministers of churches that are partners to the Formula of Agreement. The simplest way for the intention of the synod to be carried out is to “open up” the understanding of the Formula to include such churches as the General Synod declares to be in full communion with the RCA.

General Synod 1997 defined “full communion” as “full table and pulpit fellowship and the recognition of each other’s ministries, in keeping with the authority and responsibilities of the classes” (*MGS 1997*, p. 188).

R-16

To adopt the following revision to the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 4 for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions are underlined, deletions stricken out):

Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2

***Sec. 4* A consistory may call a minister of a Christian church a ~~community~~ that the General Synod has declared to be in full communion with the Reformed Church in America is a partner in ~~the Formula of Agreement.~~ The classis shall install the minister according to the office for installation in the *Liturgy* but shall not receive the minister into the classis. The minister shall be *ipso facto* a temporary member of the classis. (ADOPTED)**

Churches in Formation

This commission was made aware that the *Book of Church Order* needs to offer greater clarity to classes in the formation of new churches. Of particular concern is the question of membership and the celebration of the sacraments. In a Reformed church, matters of church membership and the sacraments are under the authority of a board of elders (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5) and of the local consistory (1.I.2). However, when a congregation has not yet been organized, it has neither a consistory nor a board of elders. How then does the congregation celebrate the sacraments?

The commission recommends that the classis provide elders from the churches of the classis. The elders will function as a board of elders for the unorganized congregation. This “board of elders” will oversee the administration of the sacraments as it admits persons to church membership, approves baptisms, and practices discipline. In addition, we recommend that the classis be charged with the “administration” of church membership of the congregation. The classis will hold the records of church membership until such time as the congregation is organized as a church.

The matter of assessments has sometimes been raised. Who pays the per-member assessment of the new congregation? The commission understands the issue not as a church order issue but as a policy matter. It may be that the synods, for example, would not “count” members of congregations not yet organized as it calculates the assessments for a classis. Or alternatively, a classis would itself calculate how it would meet its assessment obligation by means other than per-member assessment of an unorganized church.

The commission recommends:

R-17

To adopt the following amendment to the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7, Section 11, for recommendation to the classes for approval (additions are underlined, deletions stricken out):

Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7

Sec. II The classis, in exercising its authority to form new churches, shall provide elders who will:

- a. Oversee the administration of the sacraments and admit persons as members of a newly formed congregation. The classis shall administer the membership of that congregation until such time as that congregation shall be properly organized as a church.**
- ~~b. The classis, in forming new churches, shall appoint a committee to m~~Meet with those persons who desire to be organized into a church. The classis, ~~through this committee,~~ shall determine that the organizational document of the church includes a provision substantially in the form of Formulary 15. ~~The committee shall act as a board of elders in receiving members on confession, reaffirmation, or certificate.~~ Notice of the time and place of the proposed organization, and of the election of elders and deacons, shall be published for three Sundays in the church or usual place of worship. The ordination of elders and deacons shall follow the**

regular procedure. The first elders and deacons of a newly organized church shall determine by lot, at the first meeting of the consistory following upon their installation, who of their number shall serve for one year, ~~who for two years, and who, if it should be necessary, for three or more years.~~
(ADOPTED)

Other Matters

This commission received a number of requests from representatives of both regional synods and General Synod that concerned the structure of the judicial process in the Reformed Church. A variety of different issues arose that are of sufficient importance to induce the commission to begin a review of the judicial structure of the RCA. The commission has begun a study of the nature and function of the judicial process particularly at the level of the regional synods and General Synod.

A number of years ago the General Synod referred the possibility of creating a new office of evangelist to this commission (*MGS 2001*, pp. 273-274). This commission has awaited the study on office being done by the Commission on Theology. Its report to the 2005 General Synod concluded that “although it is conceivable that in some situation a new office could be called for, neither of the proposals currently being considered—that of an office of evangelist or that of an office of lay commissioned pastor—has sufficient merit to be approved” (*MGS 2005*, p. 314). With that conclusion, this commission has ceased work to prepare the church order to accommodate the office of evangelist.

Report of the Commission on Nominations

The Commission on Nominations met in person on March 7, 2006, and again by conference call on March 30, 2006, and April 20, 2006. Between these meetings members of the commission actively sought out qualified candidates, solicited Talent Bank Forms (a brief two-page application), and checked references on those who were interested in serving on a commission or agency of the Reformed Church in America, or on the board of directors of one of its related corporations. In these ways the commission sought to fulfill its responsibilities as stated in the Bylaws of the General Synod—namely, “in consultation with the general secretary, [to] search the denomination for suitable nominees. In making nominations it shall consider the geographic location, occupation, and record of previous service to the denomination of persons suggested by classes, regional synods, and other sources. It shall consider this and other pertinent data in light of each commission’s or agency’s responsibilities, membership needs, suggested nominees, and place and schedule of meetings” (Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 7.c.2).

The commission seeks to match individuals with appropriate agency or commission positions on the basis of their Spiritual gifts, Heart (or passion), Abilities, Personality, Experience and special Leadership abilities, and when possible seek to involve Young adult members of the RCA (so they can be nurtured and encouraged to serve the RCA in a variety of ways in the future). The commission remains mindful of these criteria through the use of the acronym “SHAPELY.”

Through its efforts, the Commission on Nominations has proactively fulfilled its responsibility to “search the denomination” (*Book of Church Order*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 8.c.2) and believes those nominated have the “SHAPELY” traits that make them

particularly well-suited for the work of the positions to which they are being nominated. In addition to finding the best possible people for positions on the RCA's various commissions and agencies, the commission is pleased to report once again that it has fulfilled its responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of the *Book of Church Order* are upheld.

As the number of qualified candidates from which to choose increases, the commission's work is made easier and the work of the RCA's agencies, commissions, and corporations is carried out more effectively. Consequently, the commission encourages anyone interested in serving on an RCA commission or agency to complete a Talent Bank Form and submit it to the Commission on Nominations as indicated on the form. Forms are available from the Commission on Nominations staff person, Paul M. Karssen (1-712-737-4958 or pkarssen@rca.org), or from the RCA website at www.rca.org/synod/talentbank.php.

Nominees identified by the Commission on Nominations are as follows: (Note: * indicates a final term, and # indicates an official nomination from the assembly, institution, or agency listed.)

GENERAL SYNOD COUNCIL

Class of 2007

The Rev. Lizbeth Moss

Class of 2008

* Elder Marilyn Koops

* Elder Patricia Mouquin

Regional Synod of New York#

Class of 2010

* The Rev. Glen Blumer

* The Rev. Thomas De Vries

* The Rev. Carolyn Holloway

* The Rev. Steven Vander Molen

* Elder Richard Morano

Regional Synod of Albany#

* Vacancy

Regional Synod of the Far West#

COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN ACTION

Class of 2008

Vacancy

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America observer#

Class of 2009

The Rev. Samuel Kwon

The Rev. Jeffrey S. Walton

The Rev. Steve Young

COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

Class of 2009

* Sharon Atkins

* Rev. Jacqueline Smallbones

* Deborah Swanson

COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN UNITY

Class of 2009

* The Rev. Thomas Danney

Lynne Hubers

Oliver Patterson

COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Class of 2009

- * The Rev. Kathryn Davelaar
- * The Rev. Lisa Vander Wal

COMMISSION ON CHURCH ORDER

Class of 2009

- * The Rev. Stephen Norden
Jason Schnelker

COMMISSION ON HISTORY

Class of 2009

- The Rev. Hartmut Kramer-Mills
Vacancy

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL BUSINESS

Class of 2009

- * The Rev. Stephen Eckert
James Ramsay
The Rev. Cary Winn
- Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics#
Regional Synod of Canada#
Regional Synod of Mid-America#

COMMISSION ON NOMINATIONS

Class of 2007

- The Rev. Santos Rivera
Council for Hispanic Ministries#

Class of 2009

- Donald Broek
The Rev. John Chang
- The Rev. John Kapteyn
- * The Rev. Kenneth Tenckinck
Vacancy
- Regional Synod of the Heartland#
Council for Pacific and Asian American
Ministries#
Regional Synod of Canada#
Regional Synod of New York#
Native American Indian Ministries Council#

COMMISSION ON RACE AND ETHNICITY

Class of 2009

- * Armando Alas
- * Todd McDonald
- * Ina Montoya

COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY

Class of 2008

- Vacancy
Ecumenical observer from a Reformed body#

Class of 2009

- * The Rev. De'Lafayette Awkward
The Rev. Angie L. Mabry-Nauta
- * John Miller

COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

Class of 2007

- Joanne Fernandez-McDermott

Class of 2009

- The Rev. Mark Bush
The Rev. Stacey S. Midge
- * The Rev. Cynthia Veldheer De Young

BOARD OF BENEFITS SERVICES

Class of 2009

Ellen Bylsma
John C. K. Chen
John De Koster
Mary Draayer
Craig Vander Molen

BUILDING AND EXTENSION FUND

Class of 2009

- * Stephen Hammel
- * JoEtta Ritchey-Foreman

EDITORIAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCH HERALD

Class of 2007

The Rev. Robert Gram Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics#

Class of 2008

The Rev. P. Stephan Sickler Regional Synod of New York#
Vacancy Regional Synod of the Far West#

Class of 2009

- Cindy De Glopper Regional Synod of the Heartland#
* Kenneth Neevel At Large
Willem Zwiep Regional Synod of Canada#
Jane Derksen Regional Synod of Mid-America#

MINISTERIAL FORMATION COORDINATING AGENCY

Class of 2009

- Anne Derderian-Bawinkle
* Loretta Rolle
The Rev. Larry Schuyler

NEW BRUNSWICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

All nominees to the boards of the seminaries are the official nominees of the board. However, some nominations have been made in consultation with a regional synod (*MGS 1993*, R-4, p. 300). These are indicated in the list that follows.

Class of 2010

- * The Rev. Nathan Busker
The Rev. Seong G. (Jimmy) Lim
- * Darell Schregardus
Mark Tyler
Ralph Voorhees

WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

All nominees to the boards of the seminaries are the official nominees of the board. However, some nominations have been made in consultation with a regional synod (*MGS 1993*, R-4, p. 300). These are indicated in the list that follows.

Class of 2009

- Wilbert Hamstra Western Theological Seminary
Cathy Koop Western Theological Seminary
* The Rev. Dirk Kramer Regional Synod of Canada
* The Rev. Phyllis Palsma Regional Synod of Albany
* Carol Wagner Western Theological Seminary

CENTRAL COLLEGE

Class of 2009

- * J. Lanier Little
- * John Sikkink
- * Donna Smith

HOPE COLLEGE

Class of 2010

- * Gary D. De Witt
- * Lynne R. Hendricks
- * The Rev. Charles E. Van Engen

NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE

Vacancy

R-18

To elect the above-named nominees to General Synod institutions, agencies, and commissions as indicated. (ADOPTED)

R-19

To elect Jennifer Liggett moderator of the Commission on Nominations for the 2006-2007 term. (ADOPTED)

Overtures

Mandatory Retirement

1. The Reverend Classis of Albany respectfully overtures the General Synod to amend the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Sec. 10, for recommendation to the classes for approval (deletion stricken out):

~~When a minister of a church has attained the age of seventy years, the ministerial relationship to that church shall be terminated. The classis shall terminate the relationship at a special meeting, or not later than the next regular meeting. The classis shall then appoint a supervisor over the church, unless other contractual relations approved by the classis are in effect. Those who reach the age of seventy years may continue to be employed by contract. The contract shall be for no more than twelve months and any renewal shall be subject to approval by consistory and classis. Retired ministers may be commissioned to a form of ministry.~~

Reasons:

1. Presumably it was assumed that at age seventy a pastor would no longer be physically or mentally competent to fulfill the duties of minister of Word and sacrament. Although some may indeed attain this state of incompetence at age seventy, others may still be capable of discharging their duties at age eighty-five. Arbitrarily assuming incompetence at the age of seventy is ageism, and is not permitted in most secular businesses. Should the minister of Word and sacrament be incapable of performing the duties of office satisfactorily, procedures are already available to dissolve the ministerial relationship.
2. The relationship between the minister of Word and sacrament and the individual church is a covenantal relationship. As long as both parties uphold their responsibil-

ities, there is no reason why the relationship should be severed at any arbitrary age.

3. Ministers of Word and sacrament, elders, and deacons are coequals, and yet there are no age limits for elders or deacons. This is inconsistent with the concept of parity of the three offices.
4. The consistory and the classis are most familiar with the minister and are therefore best qualified to supervise the minister. Arbitrarily terminating the call at age seventy circumvents classis and consistory supervision.

In response to Overture 1, the advisory committee recommended:

R-20

To deny Overture 1. (ADOPTED)

Reason:

The issue raised by this overture is addressed in Recommendation R-21.

Mandatory Retirement

2. The Reverend Classis of Montgomery respectfully overtures the General Synod to instruct the Commission on Church Order to study the removal from the *Book of Church Order* of provisions which provide for the termination of installations of pastors and teachers and professors of theology at the age of seventy (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 10 and Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 8, Section 10) and to recommend appropriate amendments to the 2007 General Synod.

Reasons:

1. Scripture tells us that God calls people to serve at various ages. Time and chronological age seem less important than divine will; in fact “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day” (2 Peter 3:8).
2. To impose such age limitations on ministers of Word and sacrament and professors of theology but not on elders and deacons seems contrary to the principle of parity of ministry as outlined in the Preamble to the Constitution.
3. The presence of this requirement for installed pastors appears to limit the episcopal authority of the classes to “exercise a general superintendence over its enrolled ministers” (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 1) and to “approve and disapprove calls, and effect and dissolve the relationship between ministers and churches” (BCO, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 2, Section 10). Labor reports issued at the beginning of 2006 indicate that secular businesses are offering bonuses to employees who decide to continue to work rather than retire, citing a need for experienced employees in these companies. If we are anticipating a shortage of ministers of the Word and sacrament, continuing installed relationships with able and gifted ministers beyond age seventy would seem to be useful in fulfilling the goals and objectives of Our Call.
4. Evidence does not support the contention that individuals lose their ability to serve as installed ministers or professors of theology upon reaching age seventy when they were able to do so up until that point. Individuals mature according to individual circumstances, not according to a calendar that can be applied to everyone.
5. Such discrimination based on age is not permitted in most secular businesses. In fact, Social Security is extending the eligible age to retire with full benefits.
6. A mandatory age requirement such as this seems to presume that consistories, classes, and the boards of the seminaries are incapable of pastorally negotiating the termination of these relationships when physical infirmities require, and impedes their ability to tailor appropriate responses to individual gifts and circumstances.

In response to Overture 2, the advisory committee recommended:

R-21

To instruct the Commission on Church Order to study the removal from the *Book of Church Order (BCO)* the provisions that provide for the termination of the installation of a pastor and teacher or a General Synod professor of theology at the age of seventy (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 10, and Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 8, Section 10) and to recommend appropriate amendments to the 2007 General Synod. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. The ramifications of this change to the *BCO* need to be researched in regard to the legal issues about retirement.
2. The sections of the *BCO* cited in the overture appear to discriminate against ministers of Word and sacrament and professors of theology on the basis of age.

General Synod Recommendations and Directives on the RCA Website

3. The Reverend Classis of Albany respectfully overtures the General Synod to instruct the General Synod Council to promptly display all recommendations and directives of the General Synod on the Reformed Church in America website. Recommendations and directives requiring a response from the general secretary or any other body of the Reformed Church will be noted along with the date of compliance and a description of the means of compliance.

Reasons:

1. Accountability of the general secretary and the church's administrative bodies to the General Synod, and the oversight by the General Synod of the church officers, is facilitated if their actions are clearly published, along with the date of those actions.
2. The above will encourage timely compliance with General Synod directives.

In response to Overture 3, the advisory committee recommended:

R-22

To deny Overture 3. (ADOPTED)

Reason:

The requested actions are already being done.

President's Report

4. The Reverend Classis of Muskegon respectfully overtures the General Synod to amend the *Book of Church Order* by adding the following after Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 5, Section 1, to be numbered Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 5, Section 1a: The president's report will be submitted for inclusion in the workbook distributed to the delegates with the proposals contained therein referred to the appropriate advisory committees.

Reasons:

1. Reports from General Synod standing commissions are included in the workbooks to allow appropriate time for prayerful consideration and review by the delegates.
2. The recommendations made by the president become business on the floor of General Synod without prior consideration by the delegates.

In response to Overture 4, the advisory committee recommended:

R-23
To deny Overture 4. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. The deadlines for reports for all commissions and agencies and the deadline for printing the General Synod Workbook would require that the president draft his or her report without access to reports from classes and regional synods that would more fully inform the content of the report.
2. The proposals made by the president are referred to advisory committees of the General Synod for review and action in the same manner that all other recommendations and overtures are treated.
3. The business of General Synod is generally determined beforehand and the report of the president provides a means for addressing recent developments, for responding to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and for allowing the dynamic of proclamation to have an effect.

General Secretary's Report

5. The Reverend Classis of Muskegon respectfully overtures the General Synod to amend the *Book of Church Order* by adding the following after Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 5, Section 3, to be numbered Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 5, Section 3a: The general secretary's report will be submitted for inclusion in the workbook distributed to the delegates with the proposals contained therein referred to the appropriate advisory committees.

Reasons:

1. Reports from General Synod standing commissions are included in the workbook to allow appropriate time for prayerful consideration and review by the delegates.
2. The recommendations made by the general secretary become business on the floor of General Synod without prior consideration by the delegates.

In response to Overture 5, the advisory committee recommended:

R-24
To deny Overture 5. (ADOPTED)

Reasons:

1. The deadlines for reports for all commissions and agencies and the deadline for printing the General Synod Workbook would require that the general secretary draft his or her report without full information of all the business to be addressed by the General Synod.
2. The proposals made by the general secretary are referred to advisory committees of the General Synod for review and action in the same manner that all other recommendations and overtures are treated.
3. The business of General Synod is generally determined beforehand and the report of the general secretary provides a means for addressing recent developments, for responding to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and for allowing the dynamic of proclamation to have an effect.