Report of the Commission on Christian Worship

The Commission on Christian Worship met three times over the past year. The group convened in person in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on October 12–14, 2017, in conjunction with the joint meetings of all the General Synod commissions and General Synod Council (GSC), and electronically on August 15, 2017, and February 7, 2018.

Worship Life of the RCA

Over the past few years the commission has been asking, what is worshipful for churches in the RCA? How does your congregation or your community worship together? How can we as a commission best resource the church? Two years ago, the General Synod committed $5,000 to help fund a survey on worship practices within the RCA to aid the commission in discovering answers to these questions and foster worship-based conversations across the RCA.

Joint CRC/RCA Worship Survey

The work of putting together and disseminating this survey is a joint effort between the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and the RCA, in partnership with the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship (and the affiliated Center for Social Research). The answers from the survey will guide the future work of the commission and provide valuable direction for potential workshops and learning communities.

This survey has two complementary purposes. The first is to collect specific data about how congregations worship—what sorts of songs are sung, how long the sermons are, and so forth. This commission intends to use this information to guide the creation of resources that will be most helpful to pastors, worship leaders, and congregations in worship planning.

The second purpose is to stimulate reflection and conversation among those who take the survey. This commission encourages churches to take this survey in community—with a worship committee, a praise team, the board of elders, or some other collection of people typically responsible for overseeing worship at your church. The process of working through the survey, in other words, is part of its purpose.

The members of the Commission on Christian Worship from 2016 to the present day have worked on formulating the questions for the survey by utilizing information from previous worship surveys done in 1987 and 1994. All the questions and the survey’s organization were drafted and sent to representative groups in both the RCA and CRCNA. Feedback from those “test runs” was gathered and incorporated in late 2017. The survey will go through one more round of “testing” before it is sent to the Center for Social Research to help us discern the best way to actually deploy the survey.

Hopefully, this survey will bless those who participate and better equip all who are called to lead the worship of God’s people to do so with integrity and grace. In the meantime, the commission commends to you the use of the many worship resources available through the RCA website at www.rca.org/worship.

In Appreciation

The commission gives thanks for members Drew Poppleton, whose term on the commission concludes this year, and Katherine Lee Baker. The commission is grateful to Ron Rienstra
for his work as a consultant and his partnership with John Witvliet, Joyce Borger, and Noel Snyder on the worship survey.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Palsma, moderator