Report of the Commission for Women

The Commission for Women is committed to the work of advocacy in the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Honoring the gifts of women strengthens the church and invites the full participation of all God’s people. The Commission for Women seeks to raise awareness, to provide opportunities for women in the church, to provide information so that women can participate in the leadership and life of the church, to work toward systemic changes in the church for the full inclusion of women, and to collaborate and celebrate with other RCA bodies on issues concerning women.

There were several topics that the Commission for Women discussed at our meetings this year. Of prime importance was collaborating with Women’s Transformation and Leadership in developing resources for the church regarding the #WeAreSpeaking movement, toward the goal of designating an RCA-wide #WeAreSpeaking Sunday. We also looked at ways we can collaborate with other commissions and RCA entities regarding issues of women’s mental health, sexual violence, and women affected by incarceration.

Members of our commission expressed concern about the wording in the *Book of Church Order* (*BCO*) regarding membership on Commission for Women. Currently, the *BCO* states that the commission has eight members, including “at least two men.” When researching this matter, we found that the wording regarding membership was changed in 2004 to remove marital qualifications for commission membership, but we could find no reason for the inclusion of the words “at least” two men. We value all voices in our work. In order to maintain gender diversity and prevent the possibility of the Commission for Women membership consisting of a male majority, we respectfully propose the following recommendation.

W 19-1
To adopt the following amendment to the *Book of Church Order*, for submission to the 2020 General Synod for final approval (additions are underlined; deletions are stricken):

Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5

Sec. 10 Commission for Women

a. Membership

The commission shall have eight members. All members shall share a strong desire to work for the full and complete participation of women in realizing the vision of a church and society inclusive of all gifts of all persons. At least two members shall be men. (ADOPTED)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Church Order and Governance was to vote in favor of W 19-1.

A motion was made and supported to amend W 19-1 as follows (deletions are double struck):

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VOTED: To not adopt the amendment to W 19-1.

VOTED: To adopt W 19-1.

We thank God for the opportunity to serve the RCA.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Hetrick, for the Commission for Women