

THE FORMATION OF GENERAL SYNOD

A. Seating of Delegates

Irregularities—The general secretary will report whether there are any delegates who cannot be seated because of irregularities.

Limits of the House—Delegates have been assigned seats at tables. Rights of participation are restricted to those within the limits of the house, which extend only to the area of the delegates' tables. Visitors and other guests are requested to use the seats assigned to them.

Privilege of the Floor—All regular and corresponding delegates have the privilege of the floor.

Voting Rights and Motions—Although corresponding delegates do have the privilege of the floor, they do not have the right to vote or to make motions.

B. Declaration Concerning a Quorum—The possible membership of General Synod is 258, and the enrolled membership is 245. The general secretary will declare whether a quorum is present.

C. Reading the Minutes by Title—The general secretary will read the minutes of the preceding session by title. A copy of last year's minutes is available on the general secretary's table, as are copies of the General Synod minutes since 1999, for use by delegates throughout the week. Minutes must be returned to the general secretary's table as soon as possible so others may use them.

D. Procedure for Approving the Journal—A record of General Synod actions will be posted at the Information Desk for information and review by the delegates. Any corrections to the journal should be given to one of the recording secretaries (Pam Goslinga or Angela Worthley) or to Kenneth Bradsell. The General Synod will be asked to authorize its officers to approve the journal for the meetings on Friday through Tuesday.

E. Presentation of the Rules of Order—The Bylaws and the Special Rules of Order of the General Synod may be found behind the Index/Orientation tab in this workbook.

F. Selection of Parliamentarian—Susan Sgarlat-Fels was selected to serve as parliamentarian at the 2009 General Synod.

G. Appointment of Tellers—The president has appointed as temporary clerks and tellers for the sessions of the 2009 General Synod: participants in the Seminarian Seminar; Committee of Reference members Mary Bechler and Stephanie Doeschot, and representing the Commission on Nominations, John Kapteyn.

H. Approval of the Agenda and Schedule—The general secretary will call attention to the agenda and schedule in the workbook. Synod will be asked to approve the agenda and schedule.

I. New Business—The general secretary will call attention to the schedule and procedure for presentation of new business and will read the appropriate rule of order (*Book of Church Order*, Chapter 3, Part II, Article 2, Section 8).

J. Approval of Advisory Committee Appointments—Regular and corresponding delegates have been assigned to issue advisory committees. A small number of regular and corresponding delegates have been assigned to advisory committees addressing overtures and new business, and church order and governance. Other business will be addressed in Mission and Ministry Forums prior to report in the plenary sessions of the synod. Forum attendance will be determined by delegate self-selection at delegate tables during the Friday morning or afternoon plenary.

A PARLIAMENTARY PRIMER

1. Parliamentary procedure was made for General Synod, not the General Synod for parliamentary procedure.

Items identified in the agenda as “consent” will be introduced to the delegates from the podium. These items, regarded as non-controversial and not requiring discussion or debate, will be presented for adoption in one recommendation following the introduction of all “consent” items. If an item on the consent agenda is regarded by delegates as needing further discussion or clarification it can be removed from the consent agenda at the request of any delegate. A request to remove an item on the consent agenda must be made by a delegate at a microphone.

2. Recommendations from General Synod committees, commissions, and agencies are motions and do not need to be seconded.
3. Delegates seeking the floor should approach a microphone. After being recognized, delegates give their name and the body represented, and address the president.
4. Delegates desiring action by the General Synod should offer motions; General Synod cannot act on suggestions.
5. Motions must be written prior to coming to the microphone and given *in writing* to the general secretary.
6. Delegates may not speak more than twice to a single motion.
7. The previous question may be moved only after the mover has been recognized by the chair.
8. Passage of a motion to substitute only puts the substitute before the house; it does not approve the contents.
9. An overture is not a recommendation. A recommendation in response to an overture will be prepared through the advisory committee process, by review committee, or by the Committee of Reference. The General Synod votes on the recommendation, not the overture.

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ELECTION OF PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT OF GENERAL SYNOD

Procedures for Election

The president and vice president are elected by ballot. Only regular delegates to the General Synod may vote. (Corresponding delegates do not vote.) A two-thirds majority of the ballots cast is required for election on a nominating ballot; a simple majority is required for election on an electing ballot. Tellers are responsible for distributing, collecting, and counting the ballots.

Election of the President

The first ballot cast will be an electing ballot. The current vice president will be the sole nominee. If the vote is affirmative, the vice president will be declared elected.

If the vote is not affirmative, the election for president will follow the process prescribed below for the election for the vice president.

Election of the Vice President

The first ballot cast will be a nominating ballot. Only regular delegates to this General Synod may be nominated. (Corresponding delegates may not be nominated.) If any delegate receives at least two-thirds of the votes cast, such delegate will be declared elected.

If there is no election on the nominating ballot, every delegate receiving at least ten votes will be considered in nomination and will be introduced to the General Synod. The

General Synod will then proceed to an electing ballot. If there is no election, the General Synod will proceed to a second electing ballot limited to the two persons receiving the largest number of votes on the first electing ballot.

Duties of the President and Vice President

Election to the office of vice president of the General Synod implies a three-year commitment to the General Synod Council, which meets three times a year, to the Board of Benefit Services, which meets two times a year, as well as to the work of their committees, and other responsibilities.

The vice president serves at the pleasure of or in the absence of the president.

If elected to the office of president the following year, the person then assumes the duties of the president.

The president and vice president of General Synod have traditionally traveled in order to listen for the joys and concerns of the church and ascertain the gifts and needs of the world through the RCA mission program. It is expected that the president will visit at least seven or eight geographically diverse classes and one of the RCA's mission areas, and that the vice president will visit at least four geographically diverse classes. Special attention will be given to those areas of the denomination that have not been visited recently, and to those areas that are not familiar to the president and vice president.

The president of the General Synod performs a listening function, seeking to discover the concerns and aspirations of the church. Possibilities for fulfilling this function include attendance at meetings of the church's assemblies, boards, agencies, committees, commissions, and special meetings, as well as visits to various areas of the church. The president also represents the denomination at public, ecumenical, and denominational functions.

The president gives a report of activities at each meeting of the General Synod Council and makes a final report to the General Synod at its opening session.

The president arranges for all opening and closing prayers and worship services, including the closing communion service at General Synod.

As presiding officer of the General Synod, the president must be familiar with the *Book of Church Order* and the basic rules of parliamentary procedure so that decorum and dignity are maintained in the church of Jesus Christ.

FUNCTION OF GENERAL SYNOD COMMITTEES

The annual meeting of the General Synod carries out much of its work through committees.

Committee of Reference

The Committee of Reference is made up of the members of the General Synod Council—the body elected by the synod to serve throughout the year to oversee the implementation of the mission and ministry of the RCA, to serve as the synod's executive committee, and to serve as its board of trustees. The Committee of Reference receives proposed new business that comes before the synod, recommends to the synod whether or not to accept it as new business, and if accepted, determines its placement on the agenda.

The Committee of Reference also receives recommendations for the establishment of special committees and task forces. It evaluates the request, determines whether the work falls within the responsibility of an existing commission, committee, or agency, and makes a recommendation to the synod to either establish the proposed committee—including clear reasons for doing so, its manner of appointment, length of service, and means of reporting to the General Synod—or to assign the work to an existing entity.

The agenda of the General Synod is set by the General Synod Council (GSC). Some reports will be assigned to an advisory committee on Order and Governance, Finance and Benefits, Overtures and New Business, or an advisory committee on Women's Ministry.

The General Synod Council has set the agenda so that two issues can be fully discussed by all regular and corresponding delegates in a special advisory process introduced to synod two years ago. These issues are the adoption of the Belhar Confession as a new “standard” in the RCA, and the future of RCA communications (as requested by General Synod 2008). Additional committees may be established by the GSC as required by the business coming before the synod. Some reports may come directly to the floor of the General Synod without going through a committee for advice or review. The General Synod Council determines the placement of reports.

Advisory Committees

Issue Advisory Committees. All synod delegates have been assigned to an issue advisory committee. These twenty committees will each receive and review up to two major items of business before the synod. These committees will:

- Review the reports and any overtures related to these two items.
- Advise the General Synod on the specific recommendation(s) contained in the reports they review.
- If necessary, recommend additional or alternative action in response to the reports.
- Recommend action in response to any overtures related to the issue.

The moderators of the advisory committees will select a subcommittee from their own number to develop a summary report encompassing the work of all the advisory committees. The subcommittee will also create a combined report that includes recommendations for consideration and action by the General Synod.

Order and Governance Advisory Committee. The president has appointed a small advisory committee to review all matters pertaining to church order and governance issues, including proposed changes in the bylaws of General Synod institutions, agencies, and corporations. The committee will receive and review the reports and overtures, prepare advice on specific recommendations, and provide additional recommendations if necessary.

Overtures and New Business Advisory Committee. The president has appointed a small advisory committee to receive and review all overtures from classes and regional synods (except overtures that have been sent to the issue committees or the order and governance committee) and any new business that may be brought before the synod in its opening sessions.

Finance and Benefits. The president has appointed a small advisory committee to review all matters pertaining to General Synod finances and the report of the Board of Benefits Services. The committee will receive and review the reports and any pertinent overtures, prepare advice on specific recommendations, and provide additional recommendations if necessary.

Women’s Ministries. The president has appointed a small advisory committee to review all matters pertaining to women’s ministries. The committee will receive and review the reports and any pertinent overtures, prepare advice on specific recommendations, and provide additional recommendations if necessary.

Forums. The Our Call reports, which make up the majority of the report from the General Synod Council’s work in mission and ministry, have been assigned to Mission and Ministry Forums. Because the work of the General Synod Council in these areas is in response to directives of the synod and generally spans several years of implementation, the forums are primarily opportunities for delegates to learn about and review progress in the fulfillment of the General Synod’s ten-year goal, Our Call. Forums will:

- Receive and review the reports from the GSC, along with any other pertinent supplemental information provided by GSC members and staff that will assist delegates in understanding how the General Synod’s long-range goal is being achieved.
- Advise the General Synod on specific recommendations related to the reports being reviewed.
- If necessary, recommend additional or alternative action in response to the reports.
- Provide direct informal comment and advice to GSC representatives and staff regarding the work being reviewed.

Plenary Discussion. Reports addressed only in plenary session will be discussed at tables.

Delegates will have opportunity for questions and to address concerns to the reporting body. Recommendations for action will be addressed directly in plenary sessions. Reports coming directly to the synod will likely include:

- a. Reports from RCA seminaries and the MFCA.
- b. Reports from RCA colleges.
- c. Reports identified by the Committee of Reference as appropriate for a “consent” agenda.
- d. Reports that can benefit from the process of discussion at each table during the plenary session (e.g. a commission seeking wider discussion of work in progress).

Part I

The Bylaws of the General Synod

Article 1. Privileges and Duties of Delegates

Sec. 1. Seating of Delegates

- a. A classis shall be required to be current in the payment of its General Synod assessments before its delegates are seated as members of the General Synod.
- b. Membership statistics for determining the number of delegates to General Synod shall be computed as of December 31st of the second year preceding the year in which General Synod is convened.
- c. The configuration of classes and regional synods for determining delegates to the General Synod shall be as of December 31st of the year immediately preceding the year in which General Synod is convened.

Sec. 2. Attendance

Delegates are expected to attend all meetings of the General Synod unless excused by the Committee of Reference.

Article 2. Election of President and Vice-President

Sec. 1. Method of Election

Election of the president and vice-president shall ordinarily be by electing ballot. An affirmative vote of a majority of members of synod shall be required for election on an electing ballot.

Sec. 2. Election of the President

- a. The current vice-president shall be the sole nominee on the first electing ballot. If the vote is affirmative, the current vice-president shall be declared elected.
- b. If the vote is not affirmative, the election for president shall follow the process prescribed in Section 3 immediately following.

Sec. 3. Election of the Vice-President

- a. A nominating ballot shall first be taken. If any delegate receives at least two-thirds of the votes cast, such delegate shall be declared elected.
- b. If there is no election on the nominating ballot, every delegate receiving at least ten votes shall be in nomination and shall be introduced to the synod. The synod shall then proceed to an electing ballot. If there is no election, the synod shall proceed to a second electing ballot limited to the two persons receiving the largest number of votes on the first electing ballot.

Article 3. General Synod Council

Sec. 1. Membership

The membership of the council shall consist of the following:

- a. The president, vice-president, and the immediate past president of General Synod.
- b. One member recommended by each regional synod from among its regular classical delegates to the General Synod, and elected by the General Synod upon nomination by the Commission on Nominations.
- c. Ten members elected by the General Synod shall be elected from among the regular classical delegates to the General Synod upon nomination by the Commission on Nominations.
- d. Six members elected by the General Synod upon nomination by the Commission on Nominations from among the ministers and elders of the Reformed Church in America to assure that requisite gifts, skills, and diversity are present on the council.
- e. One non-voting member from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), upon recommendation of the general secretary of the RCA.
- f. The general secretary of the General Synod, *ex-officio* and without vote.

Sec. 2. Composition

- a. One-half of the membership of the council shall be elders and one-half shall be ministers and not less than one-third of the membership shall be women. The Commission on Nominations shall assure the composition of the council reflects the full diversity of the church and shall obtain recommendations from each racial and ethnic council.
- b. The General Synod Council shall have racial/ethnic councils. The racial/ethnic councils are constitutional bodies of the Reformed Church in America which express the collective vision and voice of racial and ethnic congregants and congregations as they develop ministries and advocate for policies of racial and ethnic inclusion, economic, social, and racial justice, both within the Reformed Church in America and ecumenically.

Sec. 3. Term of Office

The term of office for the elected member shall be four years. Members shall be ineligible for two years after they have served their term. Members who have served a partial term of less than two years shall be eligible for an additional full four-year term. The term of office shall be from July 1 of the year they are elected and be completed on June 30. An employee of the GSC, the regional synods, or the classes of the Reformed Church in America may not hold membership on the council. General Synod officers shall serve as members of the council for one additional year following the expiration of their General Synod term of office.

Sec. 4. Officers

The officers of the council shall be: moderator, first vice-moderator, second vice-moderator, and secretary.

- a. The moderator will be elected annually by the General Synod Council from among the voting members.
- b. The immediate past president of the General Synod shall be the first vice-moderator, unless already elected to office, in which case the first vice-moderator shall be elected from the membership of the General Synod Council.
- c. The vice-president of General Synod shall be the second vice-moderator, unless already elected to office, in which case the second vice-moderator shall be elected from the membership of the General Synod Council.
- d. The general secretary of the General Synod shall be the secretary.

Sec. 5. Meetings

- a. The council shall hold three stated meetings each year.
- b. The council shall hold special meetings when necessary.

Sec. 6. Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the council shall be:

- a. To serve 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.
- b. To act as the agent of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America to enable its participation in God's work in the world and to equip congregations and assemblies for mission and ministry. As such, it shall establish and review policies for such programs as fulfill these purposes. General Synod Council staff shall implement and administer such programs. It shall work with other agencies, commissions, institutions, and offices of the church to which the General Synod assigns specific responsibility, and as the General Synod directs.
- c. To prepare a budget to sustain the established priorities, ministry, and mission of the Reformed Church in America and propose an assessment to the General Synod.
- d. To administer the affairs of the Reformed Church in America between the sessions of the General Synod.
- e. To manage the property, business, financial, legal, and other affairs and concerns of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

- f. To support, strengthen, and coordinate the work of the 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.
- g. To review all General Synod commissions at least once during each five-year period and to recommend to General Synod a continuation of, a reconstitution of, or a discontinuation of such commissions, with the understanding that the necessity for continuation shall not be assumed.
- h. To select and supervise a General Secretary and to establish personnel policies through which other personnel may be employed as may be beneficial to carry out the work of the church.
- i. To perform such other duties as shall be delegated and referred to it by the General Synod and to submit an annual report of its work to the General Synod.

Article 4. Membership on General Synod Agencies and Commissions

Sec. 1. Terms of Office

The following shall apply to all General Synod agencies and commissions, except as otherwise provided in the constitution or other enabling documents of the agency or commission:

- a. The term of office for members shall be three years.
- b. Members may be elected to two consecutive terms.
- c. All terms shall begin on July 1 and end on June 30.
- d. A partial term of more than one year shall be considered a full term in determining eligibility.

Sec. 2. Eligibility

Membership on General Synod agencies and commissions shall be open to all confessing members of the RCA. An employee may not hold membership on the agency or commission to which that person is accountable unless specifically provided in the agency constitution or bylaws; nor may an executive employed by the General Synod or any of the regional synods hold other than *ex-officio* membership on the General Synod Council.

No person shall be eligible to hold other than *ex-officio* membership on more than one agency or commission in each of the following groups:

- a. The General Synod Council and the Editorial Council of the *Church Herald*.
- b. The commissions of the General Synod.
- c. Delegations to ecumenical organizations.

Sec. 3. Vacancies

All vacancies shall be filled by the General Synod Council unless otherwise specified in the Bylaws. All such appointments shall be subject to approval of the General Synod at its next regular session.

Sec. 4. Racial/Ethnic Participation

A racial/ethnic council recognized by the General Synod Council may request racial/ethnic participation in other agencies and commissions of the General Synod. Such requests shall be directed to the General Synod Council which shall consult with the affected agencies and commissions and make recommendations to the General Synod. If the request for participation is granted by the General Synod, it shall be implemented by the Commission on Nominations.

Article 5. Commissions

Sec. 1. General Provisions

a. Membership

Members of the General Synod commissions shall be appointed by the synod at its annual stated session. Unless otherwise specified, each commission shall have a moderator and a secretary elected by the commission at the meeting prior to General Synod.

b. Responsibilities

The commissions shall prepare studies and develop policies for recommendation to the General Synod as they shall consider useful or as the Synod shall assign. They shall also carry out other responsibilities specifically assigned in these Bylaws or by legislative act of the General Synod.

c. Consultants

All commissions of the General Synod, except the Commission on Judicial Business and the Commission on Nominations, shall have authority to engage as consultants up to three persons with special qualifications in major areas of current concern. Such consultants shall be engaged for a period not to exceed one year and shall serve for not more than three consecutive years. They shall serve without remuneration but may be reimbursed for expenses.

Sec. 2. Commission on Christian Action

a. Membership

The commission shall have nine members. There shall also be two ecumenical observers named by the Commission on Christian Action, subject to the approval of the General Synod: one from other Reformed churches and one from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The term of office for ecumenical appointees shall be three years. They shall be subject to re-election for one additional term. All members shall be persons who have a strong

desire and demonstrated ability to make the gospel and the Christian way of life applicable to contemporary social issues in both the United States and Canada.

b. Responsibilities

The commission shall inform and advise the church concerning current social issues and the scriptural and Christian principles by which critical evaluation may be exercised on those issues and proper action taken.

Sec. 3. Commission on Christian Unity

a. Membership

The commission shall have nine members. One of the members shall be from another denomination and shall be named by the Commission on Christian Unity subject to the approval of General Synod. The general secretary shall be a member *ex-officio* without vote.

b. Responsibilities

1. The commission shall initiate and supervise action with respect to the Reformed Church in America's membership in or affiliation with ecumenical bodies.
2. It shall engage in interchurch conversations and appoint ecumenical delegates to other church bodies.
3. It shall inform the church of current ecumenical developments and advise the church concerning its ecumenical participation and relationships.

Sec. 4. Commission on Church Order

a. Membership

The commission shall have five members. Two shall be lay persons with legal training and experience. A general knowledge of, and interest in, the structure, government, and function of the denomination shall be required of all members.

b. Responsibilities

1. The commission shall have responsibility for making recommendations concerning the content, structure, and style of the *Book of Church Order*.
2. The commission shall provide advisory responses to requests for interpretation of the *Book of Church Order*.

Sec. 5. Commission on History

a. Membership

The commission shall have six members. The archivist and the general editor of the historical series shall serve as continuing consultants. A knowledge of, and interest in, the history of the Reformed Church in America shall be required of all members. Professional competence in this field is desirable.

b. Responsibilities

1. Through a sub-committee of two or three of its members, chosen on the advice of the RCA archivist, the commission shall advise the General Synod on the collection of official records and documents of the Reformed Church in America, its churches, assemblies, and agencies.
2. The commission shall actively promote research on, interest in, and reflection on, the history and traditions of the Reformed Church in America through whatever means as it may find effective.
3. The commission shall be responsible for complete oversight of the Historical Series:
 - (i) It shall define the mission and scope of the series.
 - (ii) It shall appoint the general editor of the series and review his/her work.
 - (iii) It shall invite publications, fully review publications recommended by the general editor to determine whether or not they shall be published, and make decisions concerning reprinting previously published works.
 - (iv) It shall create and maintain policies concerning such matters as author/editor remuneration, royalties, publication subventions, the means of production and distribution, and handling of proceeds.
 - (v) It shall annually receive and review a complete financial report from the general editor of the series.
4. The commission shall inform the Reformed Church in America of the relevance of the denomination's history and traditions to its program, and regularly review denominational resources that present the church's history.
5. The commission shall provide a "history center" by regularly reporting on the activities of the Reformed Church in America's educational institutions as these relate to the history and traditions of the denomination.

Sec. 6. Commission on Judicial Business

a. Membership

The commission shall have eight members, one representing each of the regional synods. Each regional synod shall nominate a layperson or a minister in alternating six-year periods in order to ensure that the commission will have within its membership at least three laypersons and at least three ministers.

Legal training and experience shall be required of lay members. A broad knowledge of and background in the structure, government, and function of the denomination shall be required of all members.

b. Responsibilities

The commission shall carry out the responsibilities assigned to it in the Disciplinary and Judicial Procedures.

Sec. 7. Commission on Race and Ethnicity

a. Membership

The commission shall have eight members. The membership shall include at least one person recommended from each of the racial/ethnic councils of the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America. At least one-half of the membership shall be laypersons.

b. Responsibilities

1. The commission shall advise the church on policies and initiatives that address issues of institutional racism and the commitment of the Reformed Church in America to become a fully multicultural and multiethnic denomination.
2. The commission shall serve as an advocate for transformation of the Reformed Church in America in regard to its multiracial and multiethnic life.
3. The commission shall recommend policies, objectives, guidelines, and strategies to assist the Reformed Church in America in its effort through all of its agencies, commissions, institutions, and other affiliated bodies to become a fully multiracial and multiethnic church.
4. The commission shall monitor, evaluate, and report on the Reformed Church in America's progress in achieving its multiracial and multiethnic objectives.

Sec. 8. Commission on Nominations

a. Membership

The commission shall have thirteen members, one representing each of the regional synods, one representing African-Americans, Hispanics, Native American Indians, and Pacific and Asian Americans, respectively, and one being the immediate past president of General Synod. Each regional synod shall nominate a layperson or a minister in alternating six-year periods in order to ensure that the commission will have within its membership four laypersons and four ministers. The members representing African-Americans, Hispanics, Native American Indians, and Pacific and Asian Americans shall be nominated by their respective councils or representative bodies.

b. The Moderator

The commission moderator shall be nominated by the commission from among the members who have served at least two years and shall be elected by the General Synod.

c. Responsibilities

1. The commission shall nominate members for the General Synod Council and all General Synod commissions and agencies, unless otherwise specified in the Bylaws.
2. The commission, in consultation with the general secretary, shall 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.
3. The commission members shall, in consultation with the stated clerks of the classes and regional synods from which they are appointed, be responsible for gathering information on nominees within the bounds of the respective synods.
4. The commission shall monitor the inclusiveness of the membership of the various commissions and agencies with respect to geography, gender, age, cultural and social differences, and academic and other appropriate expertise.

The commission shall also monitor required nominations of racial/ethnic persons to insure that the nominating body has consulted with the appropriate racial/ethnic council and that it has shown cause if it has been unable to meet the requirement.

Sec. 9. Commission on Theology

a. Membership

The commission shall have ten members. The membership shall include three persons from among the Reformed Church seminary faculties, two persons from among the faculties of the Reformed Church colleges, three pastors, and two laypersons. There shall also be two ecumenical observers named by the Commission on Theology, subject to the approval of the General Synod: one from other reformed bodies and one from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The term of office for ecumenical appointees shall be three years. They shall be subject to re-election for one additional term. Competence in theology is required of all members.

b. Responsibilities

The commission shall study theological matters arising in the life of the

church and referred to it by the General Synod or initiated within the commission itself.

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.

b. Responsibilities

The commission shall:

1. Provide opportunities and resources for developing awareness and raising consciousness concerning human liberation related to the role of women in church and society.
2. Participate and provide information for appointments to committees, commissions, agencies, and staff positions to insure partnership of men and women in the professional and decision-making leadership of the denomination.
3. Assist the church toward insuring inclusive attitudes, images, and language in all materials published, designed, or provided for use in the denomination.
4. Develop, advocate, and implement strategies for systematic change to enable the full and complete participation of women in church and society.
5. Collaborate with other RCA bodies working on issues affecting women.
6. Develop and maintain relationships with similar groups in other denominations, exchanging ideas and materials regarding issues affecting women.

Sec. 11. Commission on Christian Worship

a. Membership

The commission shall have seven members. An interest and competence in the fields of liturgics, arts, or church music shall be required of all members.

b. Responsibilities

The commission shall:

1. Advise the church of changes needed in the Liturgy and the Directory for Worship.

2. Create and disseminate worship resources for church and personal use.
3. Recommend standards for worship music and be responsible for *Rejoice in the Lord*, its subsequent editions and successor.
4. Advise the church with critique of the various versions of the Bible.
5. Inform the church of current development in liturgics, hymnody, and other worship resources with appropriate critique.

Sec. 12. Commission on Christian Education and Discipleship

a. Membership

The commission shall have seven members. At least three shall be persons with responsibility for education and discipleship in RCA churches and two shall be members from the faculties of RCA-affiliated institutions. A general knowledge of, and interest in, Christian education shall be required of all members.

b. Responsibilities

1. The commission shall prepare studies and develop policies for recommendation to the General Synod concerning Christian education and discipleship within the RCA.
2. It shall inform and advise the church concerning new developments in the practice of Christian formation and religious education.
3. It shall advise the General Synod and RCA colleges and seminaries with regard to the preparation of those who carry out the church's teaching ministry.

Article 6. General Synod Agencies

Sec. 1. Definition

General Synod agencies shall be those boards and institutions the enabling documents or constitutions of which have been approved by the General Synod.

Sec. 2. Content of Enabling Documents

The enabling documents of General Synod agencies shall include articles stating the name, purpose, and membership, and providing for meetings, reports to General Synod, bylaws, and amendments.

Article 7. Advisory Committees

Sec. 1. Function of Advisory Committees

The advisory committees shall conduct the business of the General Synod as assigned to them by the General Synod Council and as reported to the first business session of General Synod.

Sec. 2. Advisory Committees

The General Synod shall have such advisory committees as it deems appropriate.

Sec. 3. Membership of Advisory Committees

- a. The president shall ordinarily appoint the delegates to the advisory committee of their choice. All changes, with rationale, shall be reported to the General Synod Council.
- b. The advisory committees shall all be approximately the same size.
- c. Representatives of the agencies or institutions whose reports are being reviewed shall be corresponding members of the appropriate advisory committee.
- d. Each assembly having business before an advisory committee shall be permitted to send two representatives as resource persons.

Article 8. Corresponding Delegates

Sec. 1. General Synod Professors of Theology

A professor of either of the theological seminaries who is present at the session of the General Synod, but who is not a regular delegate from a seminary, shall be recognized as a corresponding delegate.

Sec. 2. Colleges

- a. The presidents of the colleges officially related to the Reformed Church in America or other persons designated by the respective boards of trustees in place of the presidents shall be corresponding delegates.
- b. Each college shall appoint two students as corresponding delegates.

Sec. 3. Church Herald

The editor of the *Church Herald* shall be a corresponding delegate. The Editorial Council may appoint one of its members, who shall also be a corresponding delegate.

Sec. 4. Seminary Students

The students of each RCA seminary shall appoint two of their members as corresponding delegates.

The Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA) shall appoint two students not enrolled in an RCA seminary as corresponding delegates.

Sec. 5. Reformed Church Women's Ministries

Reformed Church Women's Ministries shall appoint two of its members as corresponding delegates.

Sec. 6. General Secretary

The general secretary shall be a corresponding delegate.

Sec. 7. General Synod Council

The members of the General Synod Council shall be corresponding delegates.

Sec. 8. Commissions

Each General Synod commission shall appoint one of its members as a corresponding delegate.

Sec. 9. Seminary Presidents, Moderators, or Members of Boards of Trustees

The presidents of the seminaries and the moderator or another member of the respective boards of trustees for the seminaries and for the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency shall be corresponding delegates.

Sec. 10. Ecumenical Delegates

The Commission on Christian Unity may invite not more than eleven ecumenical delegates, who shall be corresponding delegates.

Sec. 11. Regional Synods

- a. Two women shall be appointed corresponding delegates by each regional synod; said appointments may be made in consultation with the Commission for Women.
- b. One young adult may be appointed as a corresponding delegate by each regional synod.

Sec. 12. Board of Benefits Services President or Member

The president of the Board of Benefits Services, or another of its members designated by the Board of Benefits Services, shall be a corresponding delegate.

Article 9. Rules of Order

The rules of order of the General Synod shall be those set forth in the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* except as is otherwise specified in the Special Rules of Order of the General Synod.

Article 10. Amendments

The Bylaws and Special Rules of Order of the General Synod may be amended at any stated meeting of the synod by vote of a majority of all the members present, provided that due notice of the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous stated session and has received the approval of a majority at that session. An amendment to the Bylaws and Special Rules of Order shall go into effect upon announcement by the president of the Synod of favorable action under this provision.

Part II

Special Rules of Order of the General Synod

Article 1. Order of Business

Sec. 1. Formation of General Synod

- a. Call to Order
- b. Worship
- c. Presentation of Roll of General Synod
- d. Seating of Delegates
- e. Declaration Concerning a Quorum
- f. Reading of the Minutes by Title
- g. Procedure for Approving the Journal
- h. Presentation of the Rules of Order
- i. Appointment of Tellers
- j. Approval of the Agenda and Schedule
- k. Approval of Advisory Committee Appointments

Sec. 2. Agenda of General Synod

- a. Disposition of Communications
- b. Presentation and Referral of New Business
- c. Report of the General Secretary
- d. Report of the President
- e. Report of the General Synod Council
- f. Report of the Board of Directors
- g. Report of the Commission on Judicial Business
- h. Reports of the Advisory Committees
- i. Election of Officers
- j. Report of the Corresponding Delegate from the Commission on Church Order

- k. Report of the Commission on Nominations
- l. Report of the Committee of Reference

Sec. 3. Close of General Synod

- a. Transfer of Presidential Office
- b. Celebration of the Lord's Supper
- c. Adjournment

Sec. 4. Prayer and Worship

Each meeting of the General Synod shall be opened and closed with prayer. The first meeting of each day shall begin with a worship service.

Article 2. Presentation of Business

Sec. 1. Objective of Reports

Reports to the General Synod shall be directed toward one or more of the following objectives:

- a. Inform General Synod of major policy and program developments in the past year's work of the reporting agency.
- b. Make recommendations for General Synod action.
- c. Raise issues for study and discussion in the church.

Sec. 2. Components of Reports

Reports to the General Synod shall contain the following components:

- a. Information on the general work of the reporting agency.
- b. Information on the agency's work related to current denominational priorities.
- c. Report on matters referred by the previous General Synod.
- d. Recommendations on all matters requiring General Synod action.

Sec. 3. Style of Reports

Reports should be written for the church at large.

Sec. 4. Length of Reports

Reports shall be as brief as comprehensive treatment allows. Recommendations shall be supported with brief background information. Study documents and policy papers shall be attached as appendices.

Reports and statements other than those prepared by RCA agencies but related to their work may be briefly summarized in appendices if references are not adequate. They shall not be appended in full unless they are being recommended as official position papers.

Sec. 5. Preparation of Reports

Reports shall ordinarily be reviewed by the reporting agency. If this has not taken place, a statement shall be appended to the end of the report, indicating: who wrote the report, who reviewed the report, and who approved the report. Reports to General Synod shall be submitted to the General Synod office three months before synod opens.

Sec. 6. Presentation of Reports

Advisory committees may supplement the printed reports with their own reports, but shall not repeat materials from the General Synod Workbook. Reports to General Synod may be commented upon, but shall not be read. The moderator of the advisory committee shall present the report to General Synod. All recommendations from the reports of commissions and agencies shall be received as motions. The advisory committee shall advise the General Synod concerning each recommendation after the recommendation has been presented by a representative of the permanent body. Representatives of reporting agencies may be invited to supplement reports orally in the meetings of the advisory committees but shall not address the General Synod.

Sec. 7. Submission of Overtures

The General Synod may receive overtures from a classis or a regional synod. It shall not receive overtures which deal with matters under adjudication or which make either direct or implied charges against persons. Overtures from classes shall be submitted to the General Synod office or postmarked not later than March 31. Overtures from regional synods shall be submitted to the General Synod office or postmarked within ten days of the close of the annual session of the regional synod.

Sec. 8. Presentation and Referral of New Business

The General Synod shall provide an opportunity for presenting new business in the first session of synod and immediately prior to the last scheduled meeting of advisory committees. The presentation shall include a well-defined statement of the nature and purpose of the proposed business and of the reasons for its presentation as new business rather than through the church's assemblies, agencies, or commissions. All new business shall automatically be referred to the Committee of Reference which shall make recommendation to the General Synod concerning the acceptance of it as new business and, if accepted, its disposition through referral or other appropriate action.

Sec. 9. Appointment of Special Committees

Any recommendation submitted to the General Synod that includes the establishment of a special committee, task force, or any other body (hereinafter "special committee") shall automatically be referred to the Committee of Reference. The

Committee of Reference shall determine whether the work falls within the responsibilities of an existing commission, committee, or agency of the General Synod. If the proposed task falls within the purview of an existing body, the Committee of Reference may recommend the appointment of the special committee provided it states clearly the reasons for doing so. In any case, it shall state the purpose of the special committee, the method of appointment, the length of service, and the means by which it shall report to the General Synod. Whenever appropriate, special committees shall work in conjunction with the relevant commissions and agencies of the General Synod.

Article 3. Transaction of Business

Sec. 1. Consultation

All agencies, commissions, and committees shall consult with other bodies affected by their recommendations before reporting to the General Synod. If such consultation has not taken place or if the body consulted has not concurred, the recommendations shall be referred to the Committee of Reference for report back to that session of synod.

Sec. 2. Proposed Amendments to the Book of Church Order

All proposed amendments to the *Book of Church Order* shall be referred to the Committee of Reference in consultation with the corresponding delegate from the Commission on Church Order for final wording and report back to the General Synod.

Sec. 3. Budget Changes

All proposed changes in the budget of General Synod shall automatically be referred to the Committee of Reference for review and report back to the synod.

Sec. 4. Roll Call Vote

A member of the General Synod shall have the right to require that the names of all members with their votes for or against an action of the synod be recorded in the minutes for the information of all; however, that request may be denied by a two-thirds majority of the synod.

GUIDE TO ALPHABETESE

AAC	African American Council
AAR	Approved Alternate Route
ATS	Association of Theological Schools
<i>BCO</i>	<i>Book of Church Order</i>
BEF	RCA Building and Extension Fund, Inc. (replaced by CGF July 2007)
BOBS	Board of Benefits Services
CBF	Church Building Fund
CCA	Commission on Christian Action
CC&C	Candidate Care and Certification
CCED	Commission on Christian Education and Discipleship
CCO	Commission on Church Order
CCT	Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A.
CGF	The RCA Church Growth Fund, Inc. (Replaced BEF July 1, 2007)
CHM	Council for Hispanic Ministries
CMT	Church Multiplication Team
CPAAM	Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries
CCU	Commission on Christian Unity
CCW	Commission on Christian Worship
C.E.	Christian Era
CERCA	Christian Educators, RCA
CFW	Commission for Women
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church Herald</i>
CHM	Council for Hispanic Ministries
CJB	Commission on Judicial Business
CMT	Church Multiplication Team
COH	Commission on History
CON	Commission on Nominations
CONG	Congregational Services
CORE	Commission on Race and Ethnicity
COSE	Council of Synod Executives
COT	Commission on Theology
CPAAM	Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries
CRC	Christian Reformed Church in North America
CRM	Church Resource Ministries
CRT	Church Revitalization Team
CW	Committee of the Whole (GSC)
EFF	Extension Foundation Fund
EVCD	Evangelism and Church Development Services
FIN	Finance Services
GSC	General Synod Council
LAT	Leadership Advisory Team
MFCA	Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (replaced Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency July 1, 2007)
<i>MGS</i>	<i>Minutes of General Synod</i>
NAIMC	Native American Indian Ministries Council
NBTS	New Brunswick Theological Seminary
NCCC	National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
NCD	Natural Church Development
OMS	Office for Ministry Services
OS	Operations and Support
P	President
PP	Past President
PACT	Program Coordination Team
RCABEF	RCA Building and Extension Fund, Inc.
RCACGF	The RCA Church Growth Fund, Inc. (Replaced BEF July 1, 2007)
RCP	Reformed Church Press
RCSC	Reformed Candidates' Supervision and Care
RCWS	Reformed Church World Service
RS	Regional Synods
RSA	Regional Synod of Albany
RSC	Regional Synod of Canada
RSFW	Regional Synod of the Far West

RSGLRegional Synod of the Great Lakes
RSHRegional Synod of the Heartland
RSM-AmRegional Synod of Mid-America
RSM-AtRegional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics
RSNYRegional Synod of New York
TEATheological Education Agency (replaced by MFCA July 1, 1999)
WARCWorld Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCCWorld Council of Churches
WTSWestern Theological Seminary