



# COMMUNION OF REFORMED EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

**Council Agenda  
November 15-16, 2017**

## **I. Invocation/Uri Brito**

## **II. Exhortation/Randy Booth**

## **III. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum**

## **IV. Adoption of Agenda**

## **V. Consent Agenda**

### **Action Item 1**

#### **Minor Constitution Fixes**

1. Change *consider* to *considered* in V.D.1.c
2. Delete the phrase *and enormity* from the first paragraph. It is a misuse of standard English.  
**Rationale:** The deletion does not alter the meaning of the sentence, and removes a distraction that takes away from the meaning.

“Given the importance ~~and enormity~~ of the task . . .”

### **Action Item 2**

#### **Minor Book of Procedures Fixes**

1. In III.3.a, alter *to which you called* to read *to which you were called*.

“to which you were called and about which you made the good confession . . .”

2. In Appendix A, under the paragraph entitled Rescind, *toa* is altered to be *to a*.

### **Action Item 3**

#### **Web Site Adjustment**

Motion for Council to authorize Webmaster Tim Gallant to maintain presbytery webpages within the CREC website in lieu of the presbyteries maintaining seven separate websites at seven separate web addresses.

*Knox made this motion in 2016, and a few weeks later, Anselm did the same. Knox also passed a motion to ask Council to consider the same for all CREC presbyteries. The idea here is not to force this top-down on the presbyteries, but to allow them to consider it. The underlined words represent my adjustments as presiding minister.*

### **Action Item 4 (PENDING REFERRAL)**

#### **Presbytery Realignment**

Christ Presbyterian Church in Knoxville (Mike Pasarilla) requests the blessing of Council to switch presbyteries. They want to change from Augustine Presbytery to Athanasius. This is being requested for practical reasons, and is contingent upon it having approved by both presbyteries.

### **Action Item 5 (PENDING REFERRAL)**

#### **Presbytery Merger**

Also for practical and logistical reasons, Anselm Presbytery is requesting the blessing of Council to have Calvin Presbytery merge and become part of Anselm. This has the agreement of both presbyteries.

#### **Item XI on the 2017 Anselm Presbytery Agenda:**

The Presiding Minister of Anselm Presbytery has received a request from Calvin Presbytery for consideration of a merger of Calvin Presbytery into Anselm Presbytery. This matter has been discussed between the Presiding Ministers of the two presbyteries and the Presiding Minister of the CREC Council, and all three recommend approval of the merger. The Presiding Minister of Anselm has also polled the members of Anselm and has heard no objection to the proposed merger.

*Motion:* Anselm Presbytery hereby extends an overture to Council to approve a merger of Calvin Presbytery and Anselm Presbytery, with the combined presbytery carrying the name Anselm Presbytery. The merger will be effective on the date that Council approves the overture.

Here is the language on the same matter from Calvin Presbytery:

**Overture to Combine Presbyteries with Anselm:** This matter has been discussed between the Presiding Ministers of the two presbyteries and the Presiding Minister of the CREC Council, and all three recommend approval of the merger. The Presiding Minister of Calvin has also polled the members of Calvin Presbytery and has heard no objection to the proposed merger.

**Motion:** Calvin Presbytery and Anselm Presbytery, will be combined with the combined presbytery carrying the name Anselm Presbytery. The merger will be effective on the date that Council approves the overture.

#### **Action Item 6**

*The proposed action here is to register this item as having been read, and therefore eligible for consideration at Council in 2020.*

#### **First Reading of a Proposed Memorial on Abortion Proposed CREC Memorial on Abortion<sup>1</sup>**

*The text for this proposed memorial can be found as **Supplementary Material 1.***

## **VI. Council/Presbyteries Conversation**

#### **Discussion Item 1**

What did your presbytery think of the MinistrySafe presentation? Is this something you want the CREC to pursue? Any concerns? Are there any polity or constitutional questions about having such a relationship with a parachurch organization? Any concerns about how to protect parishioners from false accusation?

#### **Discussion Item 2**

What did your presbytery think of the Overture on Abuse submitted by Knox Presbytery? This can be found in Supplementary Material 9. Would you like it to be brought to Council 2020 as is? Would you like it to be referred to a committee of Council to be reworked into a memorial? Would you like to do nothing with it?

#### **Discussion Item 3**

Looking ahead to the first three action items of Council Business, you will there find three proposals that concern the authority of the presiding minister and the processes of amending our documents. The three proposals are not consistent with each other. Please discuss whether in your view the CREC is in greater danger from executive overreach or from slow-moving committees. After discussing the features of the various proposals, please inform the presiding minister of Council, which proposal you would like Council to take up first, which second, and which third.

#### **Discussion Item 4**

[If time permits] Looking ahead to Action Item 22, an overture is presented to Council asking for a committee to be formed to study the doctrinal issues surrounding what some have called the “eternal subordination” of the Son. Is this an issue that people are following in your presbytery?

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1 Proposed by Gene Helsel. Adopted by Knox Presbytery, Sep 21, 2016.

Is it an esoteric doctrinal issue in your view, or one with close pastoral ramifications? Do you have any members of your presbytery who would be interested in serving on such a committee, if formed?

## **VII. Status of Committees**

For various reasons, outlined in my letter, I am disbanding the following committees:

1. Relations to other Reformed bodies (Garry V.)
2. Division into more presbyteries (Randy Booth)
3. System of doctrine (Garry V.)
4. Child security (Uri Brito)
5. And I would like to disband and reform the Same-Sex Marriage Committee, adding an additional task. That task comes from a motion from Knox (2016) to add the issue of transgendered bathroom access to the Same-Sex Marriage Committee's scope of responsibilities.

## **VIII. Committee Reports**

1. Mission Review Committee (report is in final stages now, *and will be forwarded to you shortly as **Supplementary Material 2***)
2. Confessional Standardization Committee. *The report is included as **Supplementary Material 3**.*
- 3.

## **IX. Letter from the Presiding Minister**

*The text of this letter can be found **Supplementary Material 4**.*

## **X. Letter from the Acting Presiding Minister**

*The text of this letter can be found **Supplementary Material 5***

## **XI. Council Business**

*Prior to working through this portion of the agenda, I will poll the delegates to Council to determine which Action Items if any they want to prioritize.*

### **Action Item 1**

## Constitutional Amendment

Remove the words *or governmental* from IV.C.9.a.

**Rationale:** This removes a contradiction in our Constitution. Does the presiding minister have the authority to inaugurate the process of amending the Constitution simply by making the decision, and then reporting it to the Council for approval or rejection? The answer to *that* question, according to our documents, is both *no* and *yes*.

**No:** “In this way, the Presiding Minister represents the broader assembly for any action empowered to that assembly by this constitution, except for the following: . . . *amending confessional or governmental standards*” (Constitution IV.C.9.a).

**Yes:** “Actions of the Presiding Minister of Council on behalf of Council reported to all and approved by two-thirds of Presbyteries shall be deemed as approved by the CREC Council. When two-thirds of the Presbyteries ratify an action or adopt a report, it will be consider an act of Council. *When such would result in a constitutional amendment*, three quarters of the Presbyteries must ratify. Confessional Standards cannot be altered or modified by this means” (Constitution V.D.1.c).

The first prohibits the presiding minister from amending our governmental standards by this means at all, and the second stipulates the required threshold of votes to amend our governmental standards by this means.

I propose we fix the contradiction by deleting two words:

“In this way, the Presiding Minister represents the broader assembly for any action empowered to that assembly by this constitution, except for the following: . . . *amending confessional ~~or governmental~~ standards*” (Constitution IV.C.9.a).

### Action Item 2

Amendment of Governing Documents (Augustine)

Augustine Presbytery moves we adopt the following processes for amending our governing documents: “1) that the governing documents of the CREC may be amended by agreement of 3/4 of the presbyteries at any time; 2) that Council may amend the governing documents by a 3/4 vote in stated or ad hoc meeting; 3) that the PM of Council may propose amendments of the governing documents at any time which may be approved by 3/4 of the presbyteries or a 3/4 vote of Council.”

N.B. This is placed next to Action Item 1 because of possible tensions in the positions represented.

### Action Item 3

**Anselm Constitutional Review Committee Report 2017**

The committee recommends this change in the CREC Constitution, which in our opinion would make it more consistent:

Article V.D.1.c says: “Actions of the Presiding Minister of Council on behalf of Council reported to all and approved by two-thirds of Presbyteries shall be deemed as approved by the CREC Council. When two-thirds of the Presbyteries ratify an action or adopt a report, it will be consider (sic!) an act of Council. When such would result in a constitutional amendment, three-quarters of the Presbyteries must ratify. Confessional Standards cannot be altered or modified by this means.”

However, Article VIII.A states: “This Constitution of the CREC, excluding the article containing the confessions of faith, may be amended at any time by a three quarters majority at any regularly scheduled meeting of the Church Council.”

This has brought about much discussion and even controversy last year. To avoid any such controversies in the future we recommend removing the following words: "When such would result in a constitutional amendment, three-quarters of the Presbyteries must ratify." Instead, add to the last sentence following statement: "The Constitution and." This change would bring the *procedural* provision of V.D.1 into compliance with the restriction of powers provisions in IV.C.9.a and IV.C.9.c.

For the CREC to be able to react quicker when a constitutional change seems to be required, Article VIII should also be amended.

**The proposed new version of V.D.1.c would read:**

"Actions of the Presiding Minister of Council on behalf of Council reported to all and approved by two-thirds of Presbyteries shall be deemed as approved by the CREC Council. When two-thirds of the Presbyteries ratify an action or adopt a report, it will be considered an act of Council. ~~When such would result in a constitutional amendment, three-quarters of the Presbyteries must ratify.~~ **The Constitution and** Confessional Standards cannot be altered or modified by this means."

**The proposed new version of Article VIII.A would read:**

“This Constitution of the CREC, excluding the article containing the confessions of faith, may be amended at any time by a three quarters majority at any regularly scheduled meeting of the Church Council **which includes properly scheduled *ad hoc* meetings.**”

Poznan, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

Rev. Dr. Bogumil Jarmulak (on the behalf of the committee)

Committee Members:

Rev. Ralph Smith

Rev. Garry Vanderveen

Rev. Bogumil Jarmulak

Rev. Jack Phelps, *ex officio*

#### Action Item 4

Strike *formal, non-binding, fraternal* from the Preamble of the Constitution, and add a few words. **Rationale:** Because we do not know what groups we have in mind, the current language is too specific and could easily interfere with developing such relationships.

“Membership in this confederation is in no way meant to exclude warm, ~~fraternal, and working~~ relations with other faithful Christian bodies. We therefore welcome and encourage ~~formal, non-binding, fraternal~~ any relations with like-minded churches, presbyteries, and denominations that are consistent with this Constitution” (Constitution, **Preamble, p. 4**).

#### Action Item 5

In II.A, strike the word *minister*, and add a substitute word *polity*, and add a sentence. **Rationale:** There is no such thing as a 2-, 3-, or 4- office view of church *minister*. I have also added a sentence that gives the stipulated definition of the word *pastor*.

“The CREC takes no constitutional position on the validity of 2-, 3- or 4-office view of church ~~minister~~ polity. These documents use the word *pastor* to refer to the man who has primary responsibility for leading worship on the Lord’s Day.”

#### Action Item 6

3. In II.C, delete the phrase *often called a board, a council, a consistory, or a session*. **Rationale:** For a constitution, this is unnecessary clutter, and a bit inaccurate to boot. In some bodies, for example, the consistory would be the elders and deacons together.

“Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders . . . ~~often called a board, a council, a consistory, or a session.~~”

#### Action Item 7

In II.F, delete *minister, or teacher*. **Rationale:** to make it clear we are talking about one office only, that of the pastor. The current wording was confusing to at least one 4-office church, which has an office of *teacher* distinct from *pastor*. In short, as it stands the *wording* of our Constitution could be interpreted as requiring a presbytery examination of a teacher (distinct from pastor), when the intent of the Constitution was to use three different words for the pastor.

“Any candidate for pastor, ~~minister, or teacher~~ regardless of his level of formal education . . .”

#### Action Item 8

In II.G, delete *or teacher*, and have substituted *pastor* for *minister*. **Rationale:** same as #5 above.

“If a ~~minister~~ pastor ~~or teacher~~ has already . . .”

### Action Item 9

Add a new II.H, which would require subsequent renumbering for the remainder of Article II.

**Rationale:** This would create the possibility of a presbytery exam for a teacher (distinct from pastor), which would provide that option for a 4-office church that wanted to function more closely with the historic 4-office practice.

“If a church holding the 4-office view would like the ordination of a teacher to be recognized on a broader scale within the CREC, comparable to the way the ordination of pastor currently is, such a church may request a modified examination of that man by presbytery.”

### Action Item 10

In III.M, delete *current pastoral and*. **Rationale:** Given our stance on 2-, 3-, and 4- office, this is unnecessary and confusing.

“Nevertheless, observations and questions concerning ~~current pastoral and~~ elder qualifications may occur . . .”

### Action Item 11

In IV.A.1, delete one Scripture reference and alter the *law of Christ* to match the other reference.

“presbyteries are urged to remember the ~~law of Christ~~ golden rule (Matt. 7:12; 3-Jn. 9).

### Action Item 12

In III.E.1, delete *the* and *which some may draw*, and add the words *refined* and *plain*. **Rationale:** This states the same standard in a straightforward way, without involving nameless others (“some may draw”).

“Furthermore, subscription does not mean that churches are bound to the Scripture references and allusions, incidental remarks or ~~the refined~~ refined theological deductions ~~which some may draw~~ from the plain doctrines set forth in the confessions.”

### Action Item 13

In IV.D.3.d, delete the phrase *unless and until it is found by a future Council to be in conflict with the Scripture or the Constitution of the CREC*. **Rationale:** The right of a future Council to hear the case is guaranteed by the subsequent sentence, and this sentence appears to limit any appeal to a principled argument from Scripture or the Constitution—and not from the facts of the case, for example.

The “decision of Council shall be considered settled and binding ~~unless and until it is found by a future Council to be in conflict with the Scripture or the Constitution of the CREC~~. Decisions of Council . . .”



#### Action Item 14

In IV.D.6, delete the word *judicial*. **Rationale:** the word *judicial* can be understood as a term of art, meaning that someone could argue that a formal court hearing is required.

“After a fair and open ~~judicial~~ hearing at Presbytery, a congregation may be removed . . .”

#### Action Item 15

In V.N, replace *fraternal* with *visiting*, and add a phrase about mission churches. **Rationale:** because the word *fraternal* can have a very specific meaning for different Reformed denominations, the word *visiting* accomplishes the same thing without the possible confusion.

“A simple majority of an assembly may seat candidate and ~~fraternal~~ visiting delegations, along with delegations of mission churches, . . .”

#### Action Item 16

Book of Procedures Amendment

In IV.3.f.i.2, delete the phrase *unanimous vote of* and replaced it with *decision by*.

**Rationale:** the CREC ought not to dictate the vote margins of an internal session matter of a local church like this. This is a serious overreach on the part of our broader assemblies.

“A ~~unanimous vote of~~ decision by the mother church session to terminate the relationship.”

#### Action Item 17

In Art. I of the BOP, delete two phrases and replace it with another. **Rationale:** The current requirement is cumbersome, and asks our broader assemblies to do unnecessary work, defending itself to itself.

“If there is good cause for not following these standard operating procedures in a given situation, ~~the reason for the deviation must be stated in writing and approved by the relevant broader assembly~~ noted in the minutes.

#### Action Item 18

Concerning Art. XIII of the BOP, delete the entirety of it, and replace it with the paragraph below. **Rationale:** The current language assumes far more than we can possibly know about the requirements of other bodies seeking a relationship with us, and it ties our hands beforehand.

“The CREC welcomes and encourages warm fraternal relations with likeminded churches, presbyteries, and denominations. If a request for such a relationship comes to us from another body, the appropriate presiding minister will oversee the necessary discussions, and submit the resultant proposal to presbytery or Council. That proposal requires a two-thirds vote to approve. If a broader assembly of the CREC seeks a similar

relationship with another body, the presiding minister must receive permission from the majority of the appropriate broader assembly to approach that other body. If a proposal results, the final approval must be a two-thirds vote.”

### **Action Item 19**

In XIV.1, delete the sentence about the varying colors of the logo. **Rationale:** This sentence opens the door for disputes without any mechanism for resolving them. Appropriate according to whom? Tasteful according to whom?

~~“of the CREC. It can be presented in varying colors as appropriate and tasteful for its intended use. No other emblem . . .”~~

### **Action Item 20**

Appendix C.III.6, add the phrase, *as appropriate*. **Rationale:** We should want our process to accommodate the possibility that the behavior of the disciplining church was outrageous and that we need not be bound to oversee a “good faith” effort to comply with a manifestly unjust decree.

“As appropriate, we shall refrain from receiving . . .”

### **Action Item 21**

Modification of the Memorial on Terrorism

#### **Memorial E. Terrorism**

*The text for this can be found in **Supplementary Material 6.***

### **Action Item 22 (PENDING REFERRAL)**

Motion (Christ Covenant Reformed Church – Billings) that Knox Presbytery overture Council to (1) appoint a committee of suitable presbyters to study the doctrinal question of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father, as well as how the same relates to various modern doctrinal contentions, (2) report whether this doctrine falls within the Reformed confessions adopted by our churches, and (3) make recommendations for any needed changes in or additions to the CREC’s doctrinal confessions or Memorials.

### **Action Item 23**

Ordination Procedures:

**Proposal for an Improvement in the CREC Ordination Examination Process**  
[From the Augustine Presbytery of the CREC]

*The text of this proposal can be found in **Supplementary Materials 7.***

### **Action Item 24**

**Anselm Constitutional Review Committee Report 2017**

The committee recommends this change in the CREC Constitution, which in our opinion would make it more consistent:

Article IV.A.2.j speaks about the authority of broader assemblies and it states that: "The assemblies shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner and hence their authority includes the following powers: (...)

j) to mediate in situations wherein a local church's session is at an impasse and when a local church's session is a party in a dispute either with one of its own members, with the session of another CREC church, with a CREC broader assembly, or with a non-CREC church;

k) to require mediation and non-binding arbitration, when appropriate, in order to reconcile brothers;"

In such a case it seems that IV.D.2 (which speaks about referrals) should give an individual member of a session (and not just the whole session) the right to make a referral. This would inform the presbytery (via the PM) that a mediation is needed. If we do not clarify this, then it will remain unclear how a broader assembly should be informed about a situation which might require mediation.

**The proposed new version of IV.D.2 would read:**

"A referral is a written request by a local church Session **or any of its members** or a regional Presbytery asking a broader assembly (Presbytery or Council, as the case may be) to accept jurisdiction for deciding a matter that would normally be decided by the more local assembly. Normally, all matters should be handled at the local church level. However, should a local church Session **or any of its members**, or subsequently a Presbytery, determine that the matter implicates the policies or reputation of a broader assembly, or that it otherwise justifies the consideration of a broader assembly, the more local assembly **or any of its members** may refer the matter to the broader assembly. All referrals should be sent to the Presiding Minister of the broader assembly. The Presiding Minister may, subject to approval of the broader assembly, exercise discretion to accept jurisdiction over the matter. The Presiding Minister may subsequently, subject to approval of the broader assembly, remand the matter to the more local assembly."

*The committee proposing this is the same committee as that listed in Action Item 3.*

## **Action Item 25 (PENDING REFERRAL)**

**Proposed constitutional changes  
Reformed Evangelical Church of Poznan, Poland**

**For consideration by Anselm Presbytery for referral to the CREC Council**

### **1. Proposals**

Reformed Evangelical Church of Poznan, Poland, moves to make following changes in the CREC Constitution and the Book of Procedures:

*a. BOP Article XI.2.c.ii*

Current version: “The Presiding Minister appoints an Ordination Examination Committee of five to oversee the evaluation.”

Proposed change: ““The Presiding Minister appoints an Ordination Examination Committee of five to oversee the evaluation; **all the members of the committee have to be ordained and/or recognized as pastors/teaching elders according to the Book of Procedures Article XI and/or XII.**”

*b. Constitution Article IV.C.1*

Current version: “Broader Assemblies will elect a Presiding Minister from their assembled delegates when that office is vacant.”

Proposed change: “Broader Assemblies will elect a Presiding Minister from their assembled delegates when that office is vacant. **A Presiding Minister and a Presiding Minister Pro Tempore have to be ordained and/or recognized as pastors/teaching elders according to the Book of Procedures Article XI and/or XII.**”

*c. Constitution Article IV.B.1*

Current version: “Each congregation in a presbytery will send up to two elders as voting representatives to each meeting of presbytery—ordinarily, one of whom is serving in the capacity of pastor if such exists in the local church.”

Proposed change: “Each congregation in a presbytery will send up to two elders as voting representatives to each meeting of presbytery—ordinarily, one of whom is ~~serving in the capacity of~~ **ordained** pastor if such exists in the local church. **If the local church does not have any ordained pastor, then the church will send only one delegate as voting representative to each meeting of presbytery.**”

## **2. Rationale**

Article II.A of the CREC constitution states: “The CREC takes no constitutional position on the validity of 2-, 3-, 4- office view of church minister”.

In practice some 2-office churches treat all the elders as pastors. However, sometimes when a new elder/pastor is ordained in a 2-office church, his church does not follow the Book of Procedures Article XI. Usually, this does not create any problems, sometimes, however, it may create a problem. Especially in three cases:

a. When an elder who has not been ordained according to the BOP Article XI or has not been recognized as an ordained pastor according to the BOP Article XII sits on an ordination committee to examine a future pastor. It seems that an examiner should present at least the same qualifications as an examined.

b. When a *de facto* ruling elder becomes a PM, who according to Article IV.C.9 has a degree of pastoral duties and responsibilities in a broader body (council or presbytery). It seems that in such a case a PM (of council or presbytery) should also be an ordained pastor.

c. When the majority of presbytery delegates are *de facto* ruling elders. Presbyteries sometimes deal with pastoral or theological issues which might require a more expert input which usually can be better provided by ordained pastors. Therefore it might be good if at least half of the delegates are ordained and/or recognized ministers according to BOP Article XI-XII.

Poznan, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

Rev. Dr. Bogumil Jarmulak (on the behalf of the session)

### **Action Item 26**

Need to appoint a committee to develop CREC social media.

### **Action Item 27 (PENDING REFERRAL)**

*The proposed action here, as above, is simply to register this overture as having been presented and read. This reading will be included pending referral from Knox.*

### **First Reading of a Proposed Overture on Abuse (Presented by Trinity Reformed Church to Knox Presbytery and Council 2017)**

*The text of this overture can be found as **Supplementary Material 8**.*

## **XII. Election of Officers**

Virgil Hurt has been nominated to serve as presiding minister of the CREC by both Anselm and Augustine presbyteries.

Gregg Strawbridge has been nominated to serve as presiding minister of the CREC by Knox Presbytery. He has declined to serve, but it is nice to be remembered.

Garrett Craw and Bogumil Jarmulak were both nominated for the presiding minister *pro tem* position by Anselm.

## **XIII. Closing Prayer**