

**CREC Council Minutes
September 27-28, 2023
Moscow, Idaho**

I. Call to order

II. Roll Call and Establishment of quorum

PMOC

Virgil Hurt

APMOC

Stuart Bryan

Anselm

John Stoos

Michael Denna

Athanasius

Joe Thacker

Matt Carpenter

Augustine

Laurence Windham

David Cooper

Hus

Bogumil Jarmulak

Ben Zedek Smith

Knox

Douglas Wilson

Gene Helsel

Tyndale

Steve Hemmeke

Bill Smith

Wycliffe

Randy Booth

Rob Hadding

Quorum is established.

III. PMOC Devotional by PMOC Virgil Hurt

IV. PMOC Report

Presiding Minister of Council

Report to Delegates

September 27, 2023

Moscow, Idaho

General Reflections

It has been my pleasure to serve as the Presiding Minister of Council for these

last six years. Much has happened in that time. You prayed me through heart attack and cardiac arrest five years ago this September. You encouraged and comforted me in serious health concerns in my family. You provided financial support for a mountain of medical bills. I am glad to have suffered among so many good and godly men, women, and children. You had compassion on me and my family and have relieved our suffering, comforting us with the comfort that the Lord has given you in your trials. At the core of the CREC is this love of the saints and the ability to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

When I began my first term as PMOC, there was some internal differences that threatened the continuing like-minded health of the CREC. By God's grace, we figured out how to work together, in spite of the differences, which has become a defining characteristic of the CREC. The Lord has blessed us with a spirit of unity in a bond of peace and we are stronger today than ever. Praise God.

I see some concerning signs of the ability to get along as we have had several church splits in the last few years. I know that each case is unique, and that there are sometimes legitimate reasons to divide a church. However, my experience over the last 23 years of ministry in the CREC, is that these splits are usually preventable if the sessions of the churches would hear and follow the counsel given to them by their fellow presbyters. A denomination of any size is going to see conflict and church splits. Remember Paul and Barnabas. But we should learn from these church splits how to better counsel the elders and pastors in the midst of them, so that the saints do not suffer as a result. My prayer is that we will improve both our ability to give good oversight and counsel, as well as our humility to follow that counsel.

The covid madness, with its vast governmental encroachments, has served to further unite us. Although the covid era was not the cause of creeping liberalism in the church, it was a revealing source. As churches got pushed around by the state, many complied too willingly and too long. This revealed an internal disease in the broader church, the desire to make peace with the surrounding culture and its power players. The disease continues to spread as liberalism, feminism, and sexual confusion are all gaining ground in the broader evangelical church. As this disease spreads into the previously conservative church, many Christians, pastors, and even entire churches, are finding their way to the CREC. What they find here is robust historic worship, bold biblical preaching, rejoicing in community, an emphasis on personal holiness in marriages and families. To us, perfectly normal Christianity. To a crumbling culture, a highly appealing haven of rest for God's people.

Many of our churches have seen rapid growth the last three years. Outside of Moscow, rapid CREC growth has been an exception rather than the norm. Things are changing. As long as we remain faithful, I do not expect this trend to slow down any time soon. While we are not merely about numbers, this growth is both good and important. If you are not growing, you are dying, so we welcome the growth. Like those faithful saints in the Book of Acts, we are praising God, having

favor with all the people and the Lord is adding to our churches daily such as should be saved.

As I end my second term as PMOC, I am highly encouraged by the state of the CREC. We continue to receive a great deal of interest from individuals in the USA and Canada looking for good churches and we regularly get inquiries from pastors looking to find a call in our world. They are coming from the PCA, SBC, OPC and some independent churches. That has been a big change in the last three years. We are glad to receive these good men. We need to be diligent to uphold our CREC culture as we bring in these many new voices. We also need to train up many of our own men to the ministry and are making headway towards that end.

On the international side, in addition to the works we already have going in England, Eastern Europe, Japan, Philippines, and Brazil, we are receiving calls for connections in Norway, Kenya, Ireland and other countries. We have a vast opportunity to influence the Reformed Church around the world in the next 25 years.

The Lord grant us His grace and favor as we seek to do our part to expand the Kingdom of Christ to the ends of the earth. I also pray the Lord will greatly bless the next Presiding Minister of Council and Presiding Ministers of Presbytery, as these next several years are likely to be full of rapidly expanding work and growth. To God be the glory.

Actions to Ratify

1. Responded to a request for Appeal, 5/24/2023

Reviewed the appeal brought by William and Andrew Carlin against Tyndale Presiding Minister Bill Smith's decision not to hear the complaint of the Carlins against the Trinity Evangelical Church (TEC) session. Tyndale Presbytery upheld PM Smith's decision and there is no merit to further the appeal.

Response to Appeal from Willian and Andrew Carlin

In reviewing the pertinent information of your appeal of Presiding Minister Bill Smith's decision, there is no merit for an appeal to Council. PM Smith noted that you had been released from membership of TEC as members in good standing.

Since you were released, there was no standing decision from TEC to be appealed. PM Smith made the appropriate call and this was confirmed by Tyndale Presbytery.

If your intent is to seek reconciliation with TEC and return to TEC as members, that request can be made to the session of TEC but they are under no obligation to receive you back as members. I pray that the Lord will guide you with wisdom and grace in your new church body. Grace and peace,

Virgil Hurt
Presiding Minister of Council

2. Issued a statement on July 2, 2022, after the overturning of Roe v. Wade.

Statement on the Overturning of Roe v. Wade
Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches
Presiding Minister of Council
Pastor Virgil Hurt
July 2, 2022

The CREC thanks God for the overturning of Roe v. Wade by the United States Supreme Court.

While we know that this does not end the wicked carnage of abortion in the United States, we are grateful that in this decision God has answered fifty years of prayers by millions of His people, and that it will greatly reduce the number of abortions in our land. Praise be to God!

In light of this decision, the CREC reaffirms the sacred right to life given to us by God from conception to natural death.

We call upon God's people to continue to pray for national repentance for the slaughter of countless millions of preborn children. We also call upon our national and state leaders to affirm and promote a culture of life and to denounce and forbid the culture of death surrounding abortion on demand.

Christians have long been on the forefront of ministering to women and their babies in crisis pregnancies. This decision will increase our opportunities to proclaim the good news in Jesus Christ and to meet pressing needs, the very things the Church is called to do.

We know that this decision is going to cause much division in our land.

We pray that the bitter fury now being expressed would spend itself quickly.

We pray that God will grant wisdom to His people and that they will not return evil for evil.

We pray that God will bring peace and stability to our land.

We pray that His will be done on earth, and in America, as it is in heaven.

Presiding Minister of Council

Virgil Hurt

3. Formed Several Committees

A. Committee on Sacramental Cooperation

Chairman: Rob Hadding

Members: Toby Sumpter, Jon Herr, Gabe Wetmore, Michael Foster, Rich Lusk

Purpose: To study the current and likely future situation within the CREC regarding sacramental differences and cooperation, and report same to 2023 Council.

To explore the need to update CREC governing documents to clarify sacramental cooperation between churches, and to propose, if necessary, changes to existing governing documents.

B. Critical Social Justice Committee

Purpose: Develop a Memorial on Critical Social Justice (CSJ)

Committee Members: Steve Jefferey, Steve Wilkins, Douglas Wilson

Memorial Language: Keep in mind that our new memorials need to be said in 100 words. The longer paper will be adopted as a Resource.

Resource: The committee can use Steve Jeffery's paper on CSJ, read at 2021 Council, as a resource starting point.

C. Committee on New Proposed Memorials from Knox and Hus Presbyteries

Purpose: Hus and Knox Presbyteries have submitted proposed new memorials that have overlapping scope and language. PMOC Hurt created the committee for Knox and Hus to attempt to bring the language together into one or two Proposed Memorials.

Members: Douglas Wilson (Knox), Ben Zedek Smith (Hus). A third and/or fourth member agreed upon by these two committee members. Please notify PM Hurt who the other members are.

D. Memorial Rewrite Committees

Purpose: To rewrite all Memorials to our 100 Word Memorials.

Formed 7 Committees: 1. Ministerial Training 2. Christian Education 3. Creation. 4. Terrorism 5. Homosexuality 6. Worship 7. Abortion

John Stoos moved to ratify PMOC Hurt’s Report
Laurence Windham seconded
Motion carried

V. Consent Agenda¹

David Cooper asked to pull Memorial F

Steve Hemmeke asked to pull Memorials E, G, and H

Bogumil Jarmulak asked to pull Memorial D

Douglas Wilson asked to pull pages 14-16: Section 8 Constitutional Revision (as follows below):

P. 14d Courts, Consent

PP. 14-15 e 1.2.A.B Consent, but Pull C and D. for Discussion and vote. I am suggesting we get rid of the language about electing a pro-tempore eldership. It is temporary. If they cannot get new elders, then they revert to mission status anyway.

Pull D to alter, discuss striking ‘having been approved by the Congregation’. See comments on C above.

P. 16 All but one sentence at 16. 1.b. pull to discuss striking “but deciding the matter is solely within the authority of duly appointed members of the Court, acting as a body.” This is understood in what was said above. The PM is not a member of the Court.

Douglas Wilson asked to pull pages 14-16: Section 8 Constitutional Revision (as follows below):

P. 22 Consent, except pull 4. To clarify language. I’m not sure what it is saying.

P. 22-24 Consent. This has been renumbered from our previous documents to add the new items above. However, the language in B and C is exactly the same as our previous documents Articles X and IX, respectively.

P. 26 Consent, except pull I for discussion and clarification. It says governed by ‘session’. How about a Board of Elders of CREC churches? Clarify what it means to be formally associated.

P. 27 Consent but pull last three words to discuss striking ‘at Article XII’. Things get moved around over time and then other parts do not get updated and point to the wrong location.

Michael Denna moved to pass the remaining consent agenda
David Cooper seconded
Motion carried*

VI. Memorial D

Memorial D: Creation

God is the Author of history. Poetic descriptions and multivalent meanings of Scriptural history never negate the reality of historical events. God reveals in Genesis

¹ Note: All page numbers in this section correspond to the original Council Documents agenda/packet and not the current minutes. The original packet will be attached as a separate pdf so the page numbers can be seen.

1 that he created all there is in the space of six days. Man is to pattern his own work-rest rhythm according to the pattern of God's work-rest rhythm in creation (Exodus 20:8-11), a command that assumes the reality and definition of the original creation days as being the normal twenty-four-hour days we experience. We reject any interpretation that redefines these days into anything other than six sequential twenty-four-hour days.

Ben Zedek moved to amend the title of Memorial D to "Creation in Six Days"

John Stoos seconded

Motion carried

Gene Helsel moved to accept the memorial as it now stands

David Cooper seconded

Motion carried

Final Approved Text:

Memorial D: Creation in Six Days

God is the Author of history. Poetic descriptions and multivalent meanings of Scriptural history never negate the reality of historical events. God reveals in Genesis 1 that he created all there is in the space of six days. Man is to pattern his own work-rest rhythm according to the pattern of God's work-rest rhythm in creation (Exodus 20:8-11), a command that assumes the reality and definition of the original creation days as being the normal twenty-four-hour days we experience. We reject any interpretation that redefines these days into anything other than six sequential twenty-four-hour days.

VII. Memorial E

Memorial E: Terrorism

We believe that the West's apostasy deserves God's judgments, which He administers when, how, and as He sees fit. Such judgments include the wicked actions of wicked men through whom God works to accomplish His holy and righteous purposes including summoning individuals and nations to repentance. While such judgments come from God, it is lawful for nations to respond to them, as needed, with military force. Yet it is utterly unlawful to muster women for combat or to retaliate against injustice with more injustice. Just uses of violence are defensive in nature, defending life, liberty, and property against an aggressor.

Randy Booth moved to change the name of memorial E to "Just War" and replace "the West's apostasy" with "our cultural apostasy."

Ben Zedek seconded

Motion carried

David Cooper moved to table Memorial E "just war" and compare it to the rewritten memorial E from Tyndale Presbytery until tomorrow.

Bill Smith seconded

Motion carried**Motion was later untabled.**

Title “Terrorism and Warfare” to replace “Terrorism”

Douglas Wilson suggested friendly amendment. Accepted.

Change “nor should” to “nor may”

Memorial carried***Final Approved Text:*****Memorial E. Terrorism and Warfare**

Christians are called by our Lord to be peacemakers. We therefore renounce all acts of aggression and terrorism, while recognizing the right to self-defense for individuals and nations. Combat is lawful when it defends life, liberty, and property against criminal action. Biblical principles of warfare must be followed, never returning evil for evil, nor may women or children be mustered for combat. While God may use the actions of wicked men to administer judgment on persons or nations, His hidden decrees have not been revealed to us. Regardless, it is appropriate to respond to such events with humility and repentance.

VIII. Memorial F**Memorial F: Homosexuality**

Because the one true God is Triune, love, honor, service, submission, headship, authority, and fidelity are part of divine life and are modeled by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in creation and redemption. Through male and female, marriage, sex, procreation, and family, God gives man the privilege of learning to love like God loves—monogamously for life, one man, one woman, with children brought up unto God. Any deviation from God’s creational design is sinful and destructive, for it turns away from God’s blessing, will, and glory.

Gene Helsel suggested that F be renamed to I and be titled “on Sex, Marriage, and Procreation” and that Memorial F be retitled as “on Sexual Perversion” with proposed rewritten memorial from Knox. This reflects what the 100-word memorial actually was—the abbreviated version of the memorial which was approved for a first reading in Monroe in 2021.

David Cooper moved to table until tomorrow the 100-word-rewrite of Memorial F presented to the presbyteries and to compare it to Knox’s new proposal.

Rob Hadding seconded

Motion carried

Motion was later untabled.

David Cooper moved that the Knox memorial “on Sexual Perversion” be adopted as Memorial F.

Memorial F. Sexual Perversion

“Confessing the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God, we together with the unanimous testimony of the historic Church believe that God has spoken clearly and sufficiently to the issue of human sexuality. Perversion, in its varied forms, whether gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, violates God’s design for human sexuality and is sinful, therefore, in the eyes of God. The only remedy for this, and all other sin, is found in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We call our brothers, who have strayed from this confession, to return to faithfulness in a spirit of repentance.”

Douglas Wilson Seconded.

Laurence Windham suggested friendly amendment: change “brothers” to “brethren” in the last sentence.

Ben Zedek moved to strike the last sentence as an amendment

Bogumil Jarmulak seconded.

Ben Zedek and Bogumil withdrew their amendment

Douglas Wilson suggested friendly amendment. Accepted.

“All who have strayed from this confession, should return to biblical faithfulness in a spirit of repentance.”

Ben Zedek suggested friendly amendment to make title “Sexual Perversion”. Accepted.

Motion carried

Final Approved Text:

Memorial F. Sexual Perversion

Confessing the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God, we together with the unanimous testimony of the historic Church believe that God has spoken clearly and sufficiently to the issue of human sexuality. Perversion, in its varied forms, whether gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, violates God’s design for human sexuality and is sinful, therefore, in the eyes of God. The only remedy for this, and all other sin, is found in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. All who have strayed from this confession, should return to biblical faithfulness in a spirit of repentance.

IX. Memorial G

Memorial G: Worship

Corporate Lord's Day worship is our highest privilege, greatest duty, and deepest joy. Here the Triune God gathers us together in His presence among a glorious assembly consisting of angels with the church militant and triumphant. Through the mutual service of the liturgy, God renews His covenant relationship with His people and consequently changes us and the world. Worship should be informed and governed by the Bible in its entirety and conducted with a joyful solemnity. The work of reforming worship requires wisdom, patience, and liberty as we seek to maintain a Biblical catholicity.

Steve Hemmeke moved to table Memorial G until tomorrow and to compare with the proposed changes from Tyndale.

David Cooper seconded
Motion carried

Motion was later untabled.

John Stoos moved to adopt Tyndale wording of memorial on worship below:

“Corporate worship on the Lord's Day is one of our highest privileges and greatest duties. God draws us into his special presence to serve us in Word and Sacrament. He uses this time to transform us, and the world, into his likeness. A church's liturgy must be shaped by the biblical pattern of worship, including a confession of sin, the preaching of the Word, and celebrating the Lord's Supper. Worshipers must respond to God's service with submission and joy, singing psalms and hymns with glorious music. The Scriptures require regular participation in the life and worship of a local church.”

Bogumil Jarmulak seconded
Motion carried

The original memorial on worship should be included in the Book of Resources.

Final Approved Text:

Memorial G. Worship

Corporate worship on the Lord's Day is one of our highest privileges and greatest duties. God draws us into his special presence to serve us in Word and Sacrament. He uses this time to transform us, and the world, into his likeness. A church's liturgy must be shaped by the biblical pattern of worship, including a confession of sin, the preaching of the Word, and celebrating the Lord's Supper. Worshipers must respond to God's service with submission and joy, singing psalms and hymns with glorious music. The Scriptures require regular participation in the life and worship of a local church.

X. Memorial H

Memorial H. Abortion

Because unborn humans from conception bear the image of God and are innocent of criminal wrongdoing, the act of abortion is murder and results in a corporate guilt which defiles the land when justice is not pursued on behalf of the innocent.

Therefore, we oppose taking unborn human life by any means including the various types of abortive procedures, the use of the so-called morning after pill, or the use of abortifacients. Even in those rare circumstances when a pregnancy causes an immediate threat to the life of a mother, the overriding priority is to preserve life, not take it.

Steve Hemmeke moved to table Memorial H until tomorrow and to compare with the proposed changes from Tyndale.

Doug Wilson seconded

Motion carried

Motion was later untabled.

Douglas Wilson moved to receive the original 100-word summary as Memorial H.

Gene Helsel seconded.

Motion carried

Final Approved Text:**Memorial H. Abortion**

Because unborn humans from conception bear the image of God and are innocent of criminal wrongdoing, the act of abortion is murder and results in a corporate guilt which defiles the land when justice is not pursued on behalf of the innocent.

Therefore, we oppose taking unborn human life by any means including the various types of abortive procedures, the use of the so-called morning after pill, or the use of abortifacients. Even in those rare circumstances when a pregnancy causes an immediate threat to the life of a mother, the overriding priority is to preserve life, not take it.

XI. P. 14d Courts, Consent**PP. 14-15 e 1.2.A.B Pull C and D**

Rev. Jack Phelps was invited to speak to the Council and to answer questions about the details of these proposals.

Douglas Wilson moved to table the issues in pages 14-16 and take them up tomorrow or the next acceptable time.

David Cooper Seconded

Motion carried

Motion was later untabled.

After some consultation, Jack Phelps suggested that the PMOC form a committee.

PM Hurt appointed Jack Phelps, Chris Schlect, and Rich Lusk as a committee to create an acceptable solution to the issues identified yesterday within 6 months.

**John Stoos moved to ratify PMOC Hurt's decision
David Cooper seconded
Motion carried**

Note that none of the material in pages 14-16 were passed at this Council.

XII. P. 22 IX.A.4

Jack Phelps was asked to clarify this point.

**John Stoos moved to approve amendment to Article IX. A.4
Douglas Wilson Seconded
Motion carried**

Final Approved Text:

IX.A.4

4. Deadlines set by the Court are to be complied with by the parties. Any Ruling that may subsequently be issued may not be set at jeopardy because of a party's failure to provide requested documents in a timely manner.

XIII. P. 26 Constitution, Article II.i

Douglas Wilson says that "formally associated" needs defining. This leaves the door open for parachurch organizations to form that are not under the authority of a local church.

**John Stoos moved to approve amendment to Article II. h and i
Seconded by Douglas Wilson
Motion carried**

Final Approved Text:

Article II.H and I

H. If a church having a 4-office system desires the ordination of a teacher to be

recognized on a broader scale within the CREC, comparable to the way the ordination of a pastor or minister currently is, such a church may request a modified examination of that man by Presbytery.

I. All institutions and processes of ministerial education and training that are formally associated with the CREC must be governed under the authority and supervision of a local Session of elders in a local CREC church (2 Tim. 2:1–2).

XIV. P. 27 Constitution, Article III. D

David Cooper moved to receive the amendment, but strike “at Article XII” from the amendment.

John Stoos seconded

Motion carried

Final Approved Text:

Article III.D

D. Each church shall adopt into its statement of faith the Confessional Statement on Sex, Gender, and Marriage adopted by CREC Council on August 26, 2020 and incorporated into the CREC Constitution.

XV. Memorial on Critical Social Justice (2nd Reading)

Final First Reading Approved Text as Proposed:

The Critical Social Justice Movement builds upon a Marxist vision of class conflict, incorporating themes from postmodernism and critical theory, and insisting that all of life consists of a conflict between oppressed and oppressor groups in either side of an endlessly increasing range of group identities (sex, race, etc.). In so-doing, it exacerbates conflict, undermines the pursuit of true justice, confuses and deceives Christians into abandoning long-held tenets of the faith, and obscures the true nature of the problem of human sin and the glory of God's solution in Christ. The CREC wholeheartedly opposes it.

Douglas Wilson moved to adopt this memorial as Memorial J: On Critical Social Justice

Bogumil Jarmulak seconded

[Discussion ensued based on concerns by Augustine that the CREC not respond to “flavor of the day” issues with memorials. Douglas Wilson argued that social justice is not such an issue but is *the* thing burning down our culture today.]

David Cooper formally challenged the ruling that this is a second reading but is rather a first reading of a new memorial.

Challenge failed.

It was subsequently discovered that the paper was never accepted as a first memorial reading in 2021, and thus can't be accepted as a second reading.

Douglas Wilson moved to accept this as the first reading of Memorial J on Critical Social Justice

Bogumil Jarmulak seconded

Motion carried

The new PMOC is asked to make a public statement on Critical Social Justice using this proposed memorial as a framework.

John Stoos moved to place the larger paper by Steve Jeffrey in the Book of Resources.

David Cooper seconded

Motion carried.

XVI. New Memorial Proposals Hus/Knox Presbyteries (First Consideration)

Council Committee recommended passing the new committee version of the Hus memorial proposal

Hus Presbytery: Memorial on Nations

We believe God made all nations from one man, Adam. These nations were sundered by sin. But God, by the cross of Christ and the outpouring of his Holy Spirit at Pentecost, is reuniting and reconciling the nations, drawing them into one Church, the Body of Christ. We, therefore, detest and repudiate all forms of nationalistic and racial hatred, prejudice, segregation, discrimination, and persecution, including anti-Semitism, oikophobia, white supremacy, Critical Race Theory, and kinism. We seek to unite the nations in the worship of the triune God, sanctifying all peoples, languages, and customs to His glory.

Randy Booth from Wycliffe Presbytery moved to amend by striking the portion of sentence 3 starting with "including..."

David Cooper seconded

Motion failed

Ben Zedek moved to pass the Hus Memorial proposal.

Matthew Carpenter Seconded.

Douglas Wilson suggested friendly amendment to add "at Babel" after "sundered by sin". Accepted.

John Stoos called for the question:

Motion Carried

Final Approved Text:**Memorial J: Nations**

We believe God made all nations from one man, Adam. These nations were sundered by sin at Babel. But God, by the cross of Christ and the outpouring of his Holy Spirit at Pentecost, is reuniting and reconciling the nations, drawing them into one Church, the Body of Christ. We, therefore, detest and repudiate all forms of nationalistic and racial hatred, prejudice, segregation, discrimination, and persecution, including anti-Semitism, oikophobia, white supremacy, Critical Race Theory, and kinism. We seek to unite the nations in the worship of the triune God, sanctifying all peoples, languages, and customs to His glory.

Douglas Wilson moved that a longer paper on the topic be written within a year to add to the book of memorials.

John Stoos seconded
Motion Carried

XVII. Division of Augustine and Knox Presbyteries pp. 8-11

David Cooper on behalf of Augustine Presbytery moved that Council approve the formation of a new presbytery from the member churches presently in Augustine.

The new presbytery would be made up of the 11 churches in Pennsylvania, New York, New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts. The name of the new presbytery would be called Bucer.

The geographic bounds of Augustine Presbytery would then be Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Maryland. (14 churches).

Gene Helsel seconded
Motion carried

Douglas Wilson on behalf of Knox Presbytery moved that Knox Presbytery be divided into two presbyteries at Council 2023.

The churches in Washington, Canada, and northern Idaho will retain the name Knox Presbytery. The churches in Colorado, Montana, Oregon, and southern Idaho will form a new presbytery named Kuyper. The geographical dividing line will be through the center of Moscow.

Joe Thacker seconded
Motion carried

XVIII. Clarifying ‘Communion’ in CREC, Hus

Bogumil Jarmulak moved that the following be added to the Preamble to the Constitution:

New addition: “As a Communion, we recognize the ordination of all the ministers of our churches. Additionally, we recognize the baptisms of all the members of our churches, and we receive at the Lord’s Table all communicant members of our churches.”

Proposed reading: “We use the word Communion in its common sense of being participants in one particular body gathered within the broader body, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As a Communion, we recognize the ordination of all the ministers of our churches. Additionally, we recognize the baptisms of all the members of our churches, and we receive at the Lord’s Table all communicant members of our churches.”

Gene Helsel seconded.

Steve Hemmeke moved to table the motion until after the discussion about the Sacramental Report.

David Cooper seconded
Motion carried

Motion was not untabled. Rather than being taken up again as a separate motion, it was taken up as part of the discussion on sacramental cooperation. The

XIX. Sacramental Cooperation Committee Report

Several members of the Council were invited to summarize their presbyteries’ preferences.

Bill Smith moved that recommendation 4 from the committee be adopted.
Bogumil Jarmulak seconded

Doug Wilson read the new version of 4 from Knox:

G. The CREC is a unified communion of churches with various confessional differences. While we allow a variety of views and practices related to the sacraments (e.g., paedobaptism and credobaptism, paedocommunion and credocommunion), we seek mutual submission to one another (Eph. 5:21). Therefore, all CREC churches agree to recognize the sacramental actions of other CREC churches by accepting the baptismal and communicant status of their members, regardless of any confessional differences between the churches.

1. All members in good standing of a CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church with their baptismal and communicant status intact, even if

the receiving church would not have conferred that status themselves. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g., individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

2. Any credobaptist church in this Communion must accept the validity of baptism administered in another CREC church, even if it would not have performed that particular baptism. Such a church shall accept that the person is, in fact, baptized, though they might consider the baptism irregular.

3. Any paedobaptist and credocommunion church (defined as having both communicant and non-communicant members, where non-communicants become communicants after the session accepts their profession of faith as credible), shall agree to accept the communicant status conferred by other CREC churches upon their members. Therefore, the, credocommunion churches shall agree to accept transfers of members in good standing from other CREC churches and will honor and accept the communicant status they held in their sister church, regardless of age or mental capacity, by transferring them as communicant members.

H. Members in good standing of one CREC church shall be received by transfer to another CREC church, with their baptismal and communicant status intact, regardless of confessional differences. However, once a member has transferred, the receiving church is not under obligation to deviate from its regular practice if children are subsequently born to the member. Any new admission to baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be done according to the church's normal practice.

Language for Baptists and CREC Constitution

Proposed Language:

As a church that subscribes to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, we believe, teach, and practice that "those who personally profess repentance toward God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of baptism," and that "immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary for this ordinance to be administered properly." Nevertheless, in keeping with our historic Reformed Baptist heritage, we will accept infant baptisms and baptisms performed through sprinkling or pouring as valid but improper baptisms for the purposes of membership in the local church and communicant status at the Lord's Table.

Explanation:

This proposal allows a Baptist church to believe, teach, and practice according to their credo-baptistic convictions, while also welcoming into membership and to the Lord's Table those whose baptismal practice they regard as flawed and erroneous. Because infant baptisms are administered in the triune

name, they are treated as valid, but they are improper because, according to Baptists, they err in the mode (sprinkling/pouring) and/or timing (administered prior to personal profession of faith). (The word “improper” has been chosen because it reflects the categories of the London Baptist Confession).

This proposal is in keeping with the historic Reformed Baptist tradition, as reflected in the adoption of the London Baptist Confession. When the Confession was originally adopted in 1677, it “purposely omitted” taking a stand on the question of open and closed communion, in order to accommodate the diverse positions on that question among subscribers. In other words, the 1689 London Baptist Confession was deliberately composed in such a way as to allow for the open communion position, which the CREC is asking Reformed Baptist Churches to embrace in order to join the Communion.

John Stoos moved to adopt Wilson’s suggested language into the BoP as a section on Sacramental Cooperation, and to adopt Hus’s proposal to amend the preamble. This would do the job of fulfilling the committee’s option 4 recommendation.

David Cooper seconded.

Steve Hemmeke moved to table the discussion

Matthew Carpenter seconded

Motion carried

This motion is tabled until after lunch, and discussion is opened on the other options.

The committee was commended and thanked for the time and labor in creating options and recommendations.

John Stoos moved that the committee’s report be placed in the Book of Resources

Michael Denna seconded

Motion carried

The motion was later untabled.

John Stoos moved to receive the motion from Knox Presbytery below which also includes the change in the preamble to the Constitution from Hus Presbytery.

David Cooper seconded.

Hus Proposal for Constitutional Preamble

“As a Communion, we recognize the ordination of all the ministers of our churches. Additionally, we recognize the baptisms of all the members of our churches, and we receive at the Lord’s Table all communicant members of our churches.”

Leave Article III, G and H in the Constitution as is

Insert Amplifying and Explanatory Language in BoP as Article XIII

BOP Article XIII

The CREC is a unified communion of churches with various confessional differences. While we allow a variety of views and practices related to the sacraments (e.g., paedobaptism and credobaptism, paedocommunion and credocommunion), we seek mutual submission to one another (Eph. 5:21). Therefore, all CREC churches agree to recognize the sacramental actions of other CREC churches by accepting the baptismal and communicant status of their members, regardless of any confessional differences between the churches.

1. All members in good standing of a CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church with their baptismal and communicant status intact, even if the receiving church would not have conferred that status themselves. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g., individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

2. Any credobaptist church in this Communion must accept the validity of baptism administered in another CREC church, even if it would not have performed that particular baptism. Such a church shall accept that the person is, in fact, baptized, though they might consider the baptism irregular.

3. Any paedobaptist and credocommunion church (defined as having both communicant and non-communicant members, where non-communicants become communicants after the session accepts their profession of faith as credible), shall agree to accept the communicant status conferred by other CREC churches upon their members. Therefore, the, credocommunion churches shall agree to accept transfers of members in good standing from other CREC churches and will honor and accept the communicant status they held in their sister church, regardless of age or mental capacity, by transferring them as communicant members.

Members in good standing of one CREC church shall be received by transfer to another CREC church, with their baptismal and communicant status intact, regardless of confessional differences. However, once a member has transferred, the receiving church is not under obligation to deviate from its regular practice if children are subsequently born to the member. Any new admission to baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be done according to the church's normal practice.

Language for Baptists in the CREC BoP

Proposed Language for churches entering under the 1689:

“As a church that subscribes to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, we believe, teach, and practice that ‘those who personally profess repentance toward

God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of baptism,' and that 'immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary for this ordinance to be administered properly.' Nevertheless, in keeping with our historic Reformed Baptist heritage, we will accept infant baptisms and baptisms performed through sprinkling or pouring as valid but improper baptisms for the purposes of membership in the local church and communicant status at the Lord's Table."

Explanation:

This proposal allows a Baptist church to believe, teach, and practice according to their credo-baptistic convictions, while also welcoming into membership and to the Lord's Table those whose baptismal practice they regard as flawed and erroneous. Because infant baptisms are administered in the triune name, they are treated as valid, but they are improper because, according to Baptists, they err in the mode (sprinkling/pouring) and/or timing (administered prior to personal profession of faith). (The word "improper" has been chosen because it reflects the categories of the London Baptist Confession).

This proposal is in keeping with the historic Reformed Baptist tradition, as reflected in the adoption of the London Baptist Confession. When the Confession was originally adopted in 1677, it "purposely omitted" taking a stand on the question of open and closed communion, in order to accommodate the diverse positions on that question among subscribers. In other words, the 1689 London Baptist Confession was deliberately composed in such a way as to allow for the open communion position, which the CREC is asking Reformed Baptist Churches to embrace in order to join the Communion.

London Baptist Confession on the Ordinance of Baptism

Chapter 29

1. Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ. To those baptized it is a sign of their fellowship with him in his death and resurrection, of their being grafted into him, of remission of sins, and of submitting themselves to God through Jesus Christ to live and walk in newness of life.
2. Those who personally profess repentance toward God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.
3. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, in which the individual is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
4. Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary for this ordinance to be administered properly.

Appendix to London Baptist Confession

"We are not insensible that as to the order of God's house, and entire communion therein there are some things wherein we (as well as others) are not at a full accord among ourselves, as for instance; the known principle, and state of the consciences of diverse of us, that have agreed in this Confession is such; that we cannot hold

Church-communion, with any other than Baptized-believers, and Churches constituted of such; yet some others of us have a greater liberty and freedom in our spirits that way; and therefore we have purposely omitted the mention of things of that nature, that we might concur, in giving this evidence of our agreement, both among ourselves, and with other good Christians, in those important articles of the Christian Religion, mainly insisted on by us: and this notwithstanding we all esteem it our chief concern, both among ourselves, and all others that in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours, and love him in sincerity, to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace; and in order thereunto, to exercise all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.”

Commenting on this section, James Renihan writes, “Not every subscribing congregation practiced in the same way. Some required believer’s baptism for church-communion (i.e., membership), while others received unbaptized members who had not been convinced of the duty of baptism. Since there were differences among them, a conscious decision was made to respect the two diverse positions and overlook mention of the issue in the Confession of Faith.” (To the Judicious and Impartial Reader: Baptist Symbolics Vol. 2, p. 595).

Renumber current Article XIII to Article XIV

Bill Smith suggested a friendly amendment. Accepted.

Insert the following at the end of Article III.H in the Constitution.

“After their transfer, any new admissions to baptism and the Lord’s Supper shall be done at the discretion of the receiving CREC session, according to their normal practice. Credobaptist CREC churches are strongly encouraged to allow paedobaptist member families to have their children baptized at a paedobaptist CREC church and to subsequently recognize that baptism, although this constitution does not require that they do so.”

Bogumil Jarmulak suggested a friendly amendment. Accepted.

Keep the word “improper” in the subsequent paragraphs, but strike it from the first paragraph where it explains what we expect from 1689 churches.

“As a church that subscribes to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, we believe, teach, and practice that ‘those who personally profess repentance toward God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of baptism,’ and that ‘immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary for this ordinance to be administered properly.’ Nevertheless, in keeping with our historic Reformed Baptist heritage, we will accept infant baptisms and baptisms performed through sprinkling or pouring as valid ~~but improper~~ baptisms for the purposes of membership in the local church and communicant status at the Lord’s Table.”

David Cooper suggested a friendly amendment. Accepted.

Move “according to Baptists” under “explanation” to the beginning of the clause:

This proposal allows a Baptist church to believe, teach, and practice according to their credo-baptistic convictions, while also welcoming into membership and to the Lord’s Table those whose baptismal practice they regard as flawed and erroneous. Because infant baptisms are administered in the triune name, they are treated as valid, but, **according to Baptists**, they are improper because, ~~according to Baptists~~, they err in the mode (sprinkling/pouring) and/or timing (administered prior to personal profession of faith). (The word “improper” has been chosen because it reflects the categories of the London Baptist Confession).

Motion Carried

Bogumil Jarmulak moved to remove Article 3.H and all of 3.G except for the first sentence, since that information is now covered by the BoP.

David Cooper seconded

John Stoos suggested friendly amendment. Accepted

Include in G the phrase “as included in the Book of Procedures”

Motion carried.

Final Approved Text and Actions:

- **Add the proposed addition to the Preamble of the Constitution. The first paragraph of the Preamble will now read as follows:**

The name of this confederation of churches is the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches [CREC]. We use the word Communion in its common sense of being participants in one particular body gathered within the broader body, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As a Communion, we recognize the ordination of all the ministers of our churches. Additionally, we recognize the baptisms of all the members of our churches, and we receive at the Lord’s Table all communicant members of our churches. By Reformed, we testify that we stand in the stream of historic Protestant orthodoxy and call to mind the importance of continual reformation and sanctification for the Church of Jesus Christ in light of Holy Scripture, which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. By Evangelical, we confess that the Gospel of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and the Church’s calling is to proclaim it with love and doctrinal integrity. The nature of our affiliation is one of confederation, that is, we have formed a broad connection between churches which, with respect to polity, is representative, being neither hierarchical nor autonomous. Our gathering of churches is not intended as a separation from other orthodox believers who confess the name of Christ, but rather as a gathering within that broader church, in order to work together effectively for reformation.

- **Remove all of Article III.H from the Constitution.**

- **Amend Article III.G of the Constitution to:**

All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches as included in the Book of Procedures.

- **Insert the following in the Book of Procedures as Article XIII**

BOP Article XIII

The CREC is a unified communion of churches with various confessional differences. While we allow a variety of views and practices related to the sacraments (e.g., paedobaptism and credobaptism, paedocommunion and credocommunion), we seek mutual submission to one another (Eph. 5:21). Therefore, all CREC churches agree to recognize the sacramental actions of other CREC churches by accepting the baptismal and communicant status of their members, regardless of any confessional differences between the churches.

1. All members in good standing of a CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church with their baptismal and communicant status intact, even if the receiving church would not have conferred that status themselves. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g., individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

2. Any credobaptist church in this Communion must accept the validity of baptism administered in another CREC church, even if it would not have performed that particular baptism. Such a church shall accept that the person is, in fact, baptized, though they might consider the baptism irregular.

3. Any paedobaptist and credocommunion church (defined as having both communicant and non-communicant members, where non-communicants become communicants after the session accepts their profession of faith as credible), shall agree to accept the communicant status conferred by other CREC churches upon their members. Therefore, the, credocommunion churches shall agree to accept transfers of members in good standing from other CREC churches and will honor and accept the communicant status they held in their sister church, regardless of age or mental capacity, by transferring them as communicant members.

Members in good standing of one CREC church shall be received by transfer to another CREC church, with their baptismal and communicant status intact, regardless of confessional differences. However, once a member has transferred, the receiving church is not under obligation to deviate from its regular practice if children are subsequently born to the member. Any new admission to baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be done according to the church's normal practice.

Proposed Language for churches entering under the 1689:

"As a church that subscribes to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, we

believe, teach, and practice that ‘those who personally profess repentance toward God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of baptism,’ and that ‘immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary for this ordinance to be administered properly.’ Nevertheless, in keeping with our historic Reformed Baptist heritage, we will accept infant baptisms and baptisms performed through sprinkling or pouring as valid baptisms for the purposes of membership in the local church and communicant status at the Lord’s Table.”

- **Renumber current Article XIII to Article XIV**

XX. Arbitration

Randy Booth moved to Amend the Book of Procedures and Constitution as follows:

**Book of Procedures
Article II. Definitions**

C. Nonbinding Arbitration

An informal minitrial conducted by a third party or panel in an attempt to assist disputing parties to more objectively assess the respective merit of their positions and the likely outcome of a formal trial. The outcome of non-binding arbitration is advisory only. A local church may voluntarily request binding arbitration via their local constitution or written request of the session.

**Constitution
Article IV The Broader Assemblies**

2. The authority of the broader assemblies of the CREC is set forth in various parts of this Constitution. The assemblies shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner and hence their authority includes the following powers:
k. to require mediation and non-binding arbitration, when appropriate, in order to reconcile brothers; (a local church may voluntarily request binding arbitration via their local constitution or written request of the session)

Bill Smith Seconded

Rob Hadding suggested a friendly amendment. Accepted.

“A local church may voluntarily request binding arbitration by the written request of the session as allowed by their constitution”

**New wording of Book of Procedures Amendment portion of the motion:
Book of Procedures**

Article II. Definitions

C. Nonbinding Arbitration

An informal minitrial conducted by a third party or panel in an attempt to assist disputing parties to more objectively assess the respective merit of their positions and the likely outcome of a formal trial. The outcome of non-binding arbitration is advisory only. *A local church may voluntarily request binding arbitration by the written request of the session as allowed by their constitution.*

David Cooper moved to table the motion
John Stoos seconded
Motion carried

This motion was later untabled.

Randy Booth the following language for the BoP and Constitution in place of what was offered in the previous conversation.

Replace “non-binding arbitration” in BoP II.C with “arbitration” and add the following:

“A local church may voluntarily make a written request, consistent with their constitution, and agree to abide by the decisions of the Presiding Minister, which are subject to the approval of the presbytery.”

Replace “non-binding arbitration” with “arbitration” in the constitution (Article IV.A.2.k)

David Cooper suggested a friendly amendment. Accepted.
change “agree” to “agree beforehand”

Steve Hemmeke suggested a friendly amendment. Accepted.
“alternatively” to be added to the first sentence.

“Alternatively, a local church may voluntarily make a written request consistent with their constitution and agree beforehand to abide by the decision of the presiding minister which are subject to the approval of the presbytery.”

Randy Booth suggested a friendly amendment. Accepted.
that the phrase “non-binding arbitration” be changed simply to “arbitration” in the sentence before this statement in the book of procedures.

Motion carried

Final Approved Text:

Constitution Article IV.A.2.k

k) to require mediation and arbitration, when appropriate, in order to reconcile brothers;

BoP II.C

Arbitration

An informal minitrial conducted by a third party or panel in an attempt to assist disputing parties to more objectively assess the respective merit of their positions and the likely outcome of a formal trial. The outcome of arbitration is advisory only.

Alternatively, a local church may voluntarily make a written request, consistent with their constitution, and agree beforehand to abide by the decisions of the Presiding Minister, which are subject to the approval of the presbytery.

XXI. Church Planting Commission Report, Motion on Church Plants

The Commission makes the following motion to Council:

Inquiries from existing or fledgling churches regarding membership in the CREC are increasing. Some of these are viable and others are not, but one thing that has become evident is that we are not able to facilitate very many church plants under our current system of “Mission Churches.” The Book of Procedures addresses the process of “Mission Churches,” which requires a current member-church to assume oversight responsibility and to provide a *pro tempore* session for at least two years. This is a large commitment for a church. Smaller churches often cannot spare the resources and larger churches are limited in other ways (e.g., their own growth, distance, etc.).

The other provision in our Book of Procedures addresses the process of receiving established churches into our membership by way of a “sponsoring church,” whereby they become a “candidate church,” which is a much lower level of commitment.

Our Book of Procedures provides these guidelines—these two ways to come into the CREC—but it does not prohibit other ways. For example, a group could form an independent church and after two years (if they meet the requirement of two or more elders), they could apply by way of the “candidate church” process. The Church Planting Commission recommends that we add this to our Book of Procedures to offer a third process and to provide some regular guidance for those who want to go that route:

The Church Planting Commission recommends that we add this to our Book of Procedures to offer a third process and to provide some regular guidance for those who want to go that route.

Article: CREC Guided Church Plant

1. Purpose

When a group wishes to attempt to plant a church in a new location and cannot find a sponsoring church under our “mission church” guidelines, that group may seek to establish a voluntary “pastoral counsel,” (at least three men), of current CREC pastors/elders (not necessarily from the same church or the same presbytery), who agree to offer counsel and guidance to the group.

2. Definitions

- a) A CREC Guided Church Plant: is an informal group of families and individuals who are exploring the possibility of establishing a church and who might culminate in constituting an independent church with the intent of becoming a particularized church in the CREC.
- b) Particularized church: a constituted body of Christians who have met all the criteria established by this policy to become a separate church governed by its own session and received into the CREC as full members.

3. Procedure

- a) CREC Guided Church Plant: A church shall be considered a CREC Guided Church Plant when the following conditions have been met:
 - i. A “pastoral counsel” of three or more CREC pastors/elders has formally agreed to sit on the pastoral counsel and provide advice and guidance to the group.
 - ii. A constitution has been written to define and govern the church plant work.
 - iii. The local presbytery has approved the church plant.
- b) Conditions for Particularization
 - i. The church plant shall have its own constitution and bylaws.
 - ii. The church plant shall have been formally constituted for not less than two years.
 - iii. The church plant shall have at least two pastors/elders.
 - iv. The church plant must then start the “candidate church” process as contained in the CREC Book of Procedures.
- c) Relationship to the CREC
 - i. CREC Guided Church Plants have an associate status with the CREC, as long as the above conditions are met, the pastoral counsel is maintained, and the local presbytery has approved.
 - ii. Delegates from these church plants may attend presbytery meetings as visitors.
- d) Termination of Relationship
 - i. Termination of the associate relationship between the CREC and the church plant can happen in four ways:
 - (1) The church plant becomes particularized, defined by being received into CREC membership.
 - (2) A decision by the established “pastoral counsel” to terminate the relationship.
 - (3) A decision by the church plant to terminate the relationship with the CREC.
 - (4) A vote of the presbytery to terminate the relationship.

Bogumil Jarmulak seconded.

David Cooper suggested friendly amendment. Accepted.

Purpose:

When a group wishes to attempt to plant a church in a new location and cannot find a sponsoring church under our “mission church” guidelines, that group may seek to establish a voluntary “pastoral council.” **The “pastoral council” would consist of at least three men, two of which must be from the Presbytery where the church is located, current CREC pastors/elders who agree to offer counsel and guidance to the group.**

3.a.1

A “pastoral council” of three or more CREC pastors/elders has formally agreed to sit on the pastoral council. They should vet the group, provide advice, give guidance, and report annually to Presbytery.

Motion carried.

Final Approved Text:

Article: CREC Guided Church Plant

1. Purpose

When a group wishes to attempt to plant a church in a new location and cannot find a sponsoring church under our “mission church” guidelines, that group may seek to establish a voluntary “pastoral council.” The “pastoral council” would consist of at least three men, two of which must be from the Presbytery where the church is located, current CREC pastors/elders who agree to offer counsel and guidance to the group.

2. Definitions

- a) A CREC Guided Church Plant: is an informal group of families and individuals who are exploring the possibility of establishing a church and who might culminate in constituting an independent church with the intent of becoming a particularized church in the CREC.
- b) Particularized church: a constituted body of Christians who have met all the criteria established by this policy to become a separate church governed by its own session and received into the CREC as full members.

3. Procedure

- a) CREC Guided Church Plant: A church shall be considered a CREC Guided Church Plant when the following conditions have been met:
 - i. A “pastoral council” of three or more CREC pastors/elders has formally agreed to sit on the pastoral council. They should vet the group, provide

- advice, give guidance, and report annually to Presbytery.
 - ii. A constitution has been written to define and govern the church plant work.
 - iii. The local presbytery has approved the church plant.
- b) Conditions for Particularization
- i. The church plant shall have its own constitution and bylaws.
 - ii. The church plant shall have been formally constituted for not less than two years.
 - iii. The church plant shall have at least two pastors/elders.
 - iv. The church plant must then start the “candidate church” process as contained in the CREC Book of Procedures.
- c) Relationship to the CREC
- i. CREC Guided Church Plants have an associate status with the CREC, as long as the above conditions are met, the pastoral counsel is maintained, and the local presbytery has approved.
 - ii. Delegates from these church plants may attend presbytery meetings as visitors.
- d) Termination of Relationship
- i. Termination of the associate relationship between the CREC and the church plant can happen in four ways:
 - (1) The church plant becomes particularized, defined by being received into CREC membership.
 - (2) A decision by the established “pastoral counsel” to terminate the relationship.
 - (3) A decision by the church plant to terminate the relationship with the CREC.
 - (4) A vote of the presbytery to terminate the relationship.

XXII. Pro Temp Elders/Church Status, Tyndale

Steve Hemmeke moved on behalf of Tyndale Presbytery to add the following to the Constitution as Article III.O

Constitution III.O

1. A CREC Session may ask a nearby CREC church Session to have one of its members serve on its Session as a Pro Tempore (for a time) elder. His renewable term, and purpose shall be specified by the Session. The purpose may be enriching its counsel, or also to temporarily supply a plurality of elders. Presiding Ministers should be advised and offer counsel before proceeding.
2. Member churches whose Session number is reduced to one local pastor/elder, shall be reduced in status to mission church at the second consecutive presbytery meeting in that situation, or earlier, at the presbytery’s discretion, regardless of pro tempore elder activity on said Session. The presbytery shall appoint an established Session to take oversight of the work until it is ready to return to full member status.

3. Pastors/elders from two different Sessions shall not serve on each other's Sessions, where either Session has only one local pastor/elder, without consent from the presbytery. A Session with only one local elder shall not allow him to serve as Pro Temp on another Session, without consent from the presbytery.

Bill Smith Seconded

Douglas Wilson suggested a friendly amendment: changing “advised” to “informed” under 1.

David Cooper suggested a friendly amendment: changing final sentence in 2 to remove “the Presbytery shall appoint” – new text: “An established Session will take oversight of the work until it is ready to return to full member status.”

Both accepted

Motion carried

Final Approved Text:

Constitution III.O

1. A CREC Session may ask a nearby CREC church Session to have one of its members serve on its Session as a Pro Tempore (for a time) elder. His renewable term, and purpose shall be specified by the Session. The purpose may be enriching its counsel, or also to temporarily supply a plurality of elders. Presiding Ministers should be informed and offer counsel before proceeding.
2. Member churches whose Session number is reduced to one local pastor/elder, shall be reduced in status to mission church at the second consecutive presbytery meeting in that situation, or earlier, at the presbytery’s discretion, regardless of pro tempore elder activity on said Session. An established Session will take oversight of the work until it is ready to return to full member status.
3. Pastors/elders from two different Sessions shall not serve on each other's Sessions, where either Session has only one local pastor/elder, without consent from the presbytery. A Session with only one local elder shall not allow him to serve as Pro Temp on another Session, without consent from the presbytery.

XXIII. Without Objection, PM Hurt adds to the agenda the second reading of the memorial on abuse.

Abuse is the mistreatment of any person by neglect, cruelty, or violence, whether spiritually, physically, or verbally as defined by the Word of God alone. God requires His people to provide compassionate and judicious care that defends true victims, and which calls for appropriate reporting, church discipline, and criminal prosecution of genuine perpetrators. Therefore, we reject all coercive or manipulative pressure or alien evaluative standards that pervert biblical justice, whether by those who would ignore true abuse or by intellectual trends that seek to weaponize victimhood, since they necessarily distort the healing grace offered to all in the gospel.

John Stoos moved to approve the second reading on the memorial on abuse
David Cooper seconded
Motion carried

XXIV. Memorial I

David Cooper moved that memorial I by Tyndale be adopted under the amended title “Human Sexuality” and that the longer paper be adopted as a resource.
Steve Hemmeke seconded.

“Humans are created in the image of God and therefore receive the highest honor among God's creatures. Humanity consists of two sexes – male and female – each with unique gifts, callings, and authority. God designed sexual intimacy to be enjoyed in marriage, between one man and one woman, for their mutual pleasure and the procreation of children. Any desire to deviate from this design is sinful and destructive, such as premarital sex, pornography, adultery, polygamy, same-sex attraction, homosexual behavior, and transgenderism. Christians must strive to forsake these sins, by the power of the Holy Spirit, trusting in the forgiveness of Jesus.”

Bogumil suggested a friendly amendment “replace “mutual pleasure and the procreation of children” with “union and the procreation of children”. **Accepted.**
Douglas Wilson suggested a friendly amendment: “union, protection, companionship, and procreation of children.” **Accepted.**

“Humans are created in the image of God and therefore receive the highest honor among God's creatures. Humanity consists of two sexes – male and female – each with unique gifts, callings, and authority. God designed sexual intimacy to be enjoyed in marriage, between one man and one woman, for union, protection, companionship, and procreation of children. Any desire to deviate from this design is sinful and destructive, such as premarital sex, pornography, adultery, polygamy, same-sex attraction, homosexual behavior, and transgenderism. Christians must strive to forsake these sins, by the power of the Holy Spirit, trusting in the forgiveness of Jesus.”

John Stoos suggested an amendment. Add “lust” to the list.
Douglas Wilson countered with striking “same-sex attraction”
David Cooper suggested an amendment: Add “or act” after “desire”
Wilson and Cooper amendments accepted.

Motion carried

Final Approved Text:

Memorial I. Human Sexuality

Humans are created in the image of God and therefore receive the highest honor

among God's creatures. Humanity consists of two sexes – male and female – each with unique gifts, callings, and authority. God designed sexual intimacy to be enjoyed in marriage, between one man and one woman, for union, protection, companionship, and procreation of children. Any desire or act that deviates from this design is sinful and destructive, such as premarital sex, pornography, adultery, polygamy, homosexual behavior, and transgenderism. Christians must strive to forsake these sins, by the power of the Holy Spirit, trusting in the forgiveness of Jesus.

XXV. Common Confession

Hus moved to recommend that the incoming PMOC establish a committee that would propose a common confession of faith for all the CREC churches.

Randy Booth seconded.

Motion carried

XXVI. 2026 Council meeting

The Nashville churches have invited Council to be in Nashville for 2026

XXVII. Election of New PMOC and PMOC Pro Tempore

John Stoos moved to open elections for Uri Brito as PMOC and Randy Booth as PMOC Pro Tempore.

Michael Denna Seconded

Uri Brito passed election

Randy Booth passed election

XXVIII. John Stoos moved to commend PMOC Hurt for his work as PMOC.

Ben Zedek Seconded

Motion carried

XXIX. John Stoos moved to commend Trinity Church and Christ Church for their hospitality and service in hosting Council

Steve Hemmeke Seconded

Motion carried

XXX. John Stoos moved to adjourn

Michael Denna seconded

Motion Carried

Council Documents

BEGIN CONSENT AGENDA

Proposed 100 Word Versions of Memorials

Memorial A. Ministerial Training

We believe that ministerial training is best conducted under the oversight of a local session, including an intense apprenticeship within the church which tests and develops the gifts, skills, knowledge, and spiritual qualifications of the candidate. At the same time, we recognize that many local congregations lack the resources to provide rigorous academic training, including training in the original languages. Therefore, we still see a place for churches to send men to seminaries, while retaining their responsibility to oversee and facilitate the training.

Ideally seminaries would function as an academic extension which supplement the overall training program of the church.

Memorial B: Confessional Revision

Ok, as is.

Memorial C: Christian Education

God has explicitly commanded parents to bring up their children in the education and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). Given the impossibility of neutrality in education, we do heartily affirm the necessity of educating our children in a manner that is explicitly Christian in content and rigor. While parents who do not fully understand the indispensability of Christian education should be warmly received into membership, we nevertheless encourage Christian parents to seek alternative to the government school system. In cases, where Christian education is an impossibility, parents must be active and diligent in overseeing the education of their children.

Memorial D: Creation

God is the Author of history. Poetic descriptions and multivalent meanings of Scriptural history never negate the reality of historical events. God reveals in Genesis 1 that he created all there is in the space of six days. Man is to pattern his own work-rest rhythm according to the pattern of God's work-rest rhythm in creation (Exodus 20:8-11), a command that assumes the reality and definition of the original creation days as being the normal twenty-four-hour days we experience. We reject any interpretation that redefines these days into anything other than six sequential twenty-four-hour days.

Memorial E: Terrorism

We believe that the West's apostasy deserves God's judgments, which He

administers when, how, and as He sees fit. Such judgments include the wicked actions of wicked men through whom God works to accomplish His holy and righteous purposes including summoning individuals and nations to repentance. While such judgments come from God, it is lawful for nations to respond to them, as needed, with military force. Yet it is utterly unlawful to muster women for combat or to retaliate against injustice with more injustice. Just uses of violence are defensive in nature, defending life, liberty, and property against an aggressor.

Memorial F: Homosexuality

Because the one true God is Triune, love, honor, service, submission, headship, authority, and fidelity are part of divine life and are modeled by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in creation and redemption. Through male and female, marriage, sex, procreation, and family, God gives man the privilege of learning to love like God loves—monogamously for life, one man, one woman, with children brought up unto God. Any deviation from God’s creational design is sinful and destructive, for it turns away from God’s blessing, will, and glory.

Memorial G: Worship

Corporate Lord’s Day worship is our highest privilege, greatest duty, and deepest joy. Here the Triune God gathers us together in His presence among a glorious assembly consisting of angels with the church militant and triumphant. Through the mutual service of the liturgy, God renews His covenant relationship with His people and consequently changes us and the world. Worship should be informed and governed by the Bible in its entirety and conducted with a joyful solemnity. The work of reforming worship requires wisdom, patience, and liberty as we seek to maintain a Biblical catholicity.

Memorial H: Abortion

Because unborn humans from conception bear the image of God and are innocent of criminal wrongdoing, the act of abortion is murder and results in a corporate guilt which defiles the land when justice is not pursued on behalf of the innocent. Therefore, we oppose taking unborn human life by any means including the various types of abortive procedures, the use of the so-called morning after pill, or the use of abortifacients. Even in those rare circumstances when a pregnancy causes an immediate threat to the life of a mother, the overriding priority is to preserve life, not take it.

Potential New Memorial On Critical Social Justice, Formerly referred to by us in previous reading as Critical Race Theory

100 Word Memorial Version

The Critical Social Justice Movement builds upon a Marxist vision of class conflict, incorporating themes from postmodernism and critical theory, and insisting that all of life consists of a conflict between

oppressed and oppressor groups in either side of an endlessly increasing range of group identities (sex, race, etc.). In so-doing, it exacerbates conflict, undermines the pursuit of true justice, confuses and deceives Christians into abandoning long-held tenets of the faith, and obscures the true nature of the problem of human sin and the glory of God's solution in Christ. The CREC wholeheartedly opposes it.

Below is the re-written statement. There was a first reading at Council 2021. If it is adopted as a Memorial, this statement would become a resource.

The Critical Social Justice Movement and the CREC

In recent years, the so-called Critical Social Justice movement and its ideological underpinnings in Critical Theory have gained increasing prominence in the public square, in particular with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. The Critical Social Justice Movement (hereafter CSJ) claims to be committed to addressing injustices in our society, and many Christians and churches have begun to speak its language and embrace its tenets. We believe this is a serious mistake, and the aim of this short statement is briefly to explain why.

This statement does not attempt to expound CSJ in detail, much less to articulate a comprehensive critique. Our aims are simply to summarize in the broadest possible terms the intellectual history and nature of the ideology, to describe some of its present effects, and to state briefly our position on the issues it raises. Anyone wanting to discuss in more detail the CREC's position on any of these matters is encouraged to contact their nearest CREC Church.

CSJ traces its intellectual roots back at least as far as the 19th century and Karl Marx's theories of class warfare. Marxism portrayed all of life as a conflict between the oppressive bourgeoisie and the oppressed workers, and sought to awaken the workers to their oppressed status, encouraging them to rise up and overthrow their wealthy bourgeoisie overlords.

In the middle of the 20th century, philosophers of the Frankfurt School began to apply Marx's theories of class conflict in other domains. For example, they claimed that all of life is a conflict between oppressive white and oppressed black people, and sought to awaken black people to their oppressed status and encourage them to rise up against their white oppressors. This Marxist analysis was replicated in other spheres, eventually giving birth to Critical Gender Theory, Queer Theory, Postcolonial Theory, and so on.

The uprising of "the oppressed" envisaged by the Frankfurt School would not be altogether peaceful. Herbert Marcuse, one of their most prominent representatives, argued that physical violence, through theoretically wrong

on ethical grounds, is justifiable when practiced by “the oppressed” (in Marcuse’s view, those on the political left) against “the oppressors” (in Marcuse’s view, political conservatives).

These ideas were further sharpened in the later 20th century by postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault, who insisted that all claims to truth are in fact merely disguised tools of political power, instruments of manipulation wielded by dominant groups in an attempt to keep the oppressed in their place. The proper aim of all discourse is not to uncover the truth, but rather to expose how this manipulation is being done.

Around the same time, legal scholar Derrick Bell combined many of these themes, insisting famously that racism is the ordinary state of society, and that even the attempts by some whites to promote black welfare are motivated by cynical self-interest. He coined the term “Critical Race Theory” to refer to this philosophical framework. His student Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the term “intersectionality” to highlight the fact that many people exist at the “intersection” of two or more of these oppressed groups (black women, for example, or disabled transgender people), further intensifying their oppressed status.

The contemporary Social Justice movement is the natural product of all these ideas. It defines all people by their membership of one or more “oppressed” or “oppressor” groups; insists that every white person is racist, every man is sexist, every straight person is anti-gay, and so on; and demands that oppressors apologize for their (and in some cases their forebears’) prejudice, while at the same time paradoxically maintaining that all such apologies are motivated by cynical self-interest and cannot in any case expiate the guilt of the accused. It encourages ceaseless activism in every sphere of life, with the result that the mission of every organization is effectively rendered subservient to its overarching aims. It refuses to engage in any kind of reasoned discussion, since all claims to truth are merely tools of manipulation and all claims of innocence merely prove the speaker’s guilt. Ultimately, the Social Justice movement legitimates physical violence against people and property in the pursuit of its goals.

Most contemporary Social Justice activists appear to be unaware of this history and the true aims of the movement, and their involvement is arguably more naive than malicious. Many have been recruited through social media, which fosters the rapid spread of new ideas without generally encouraging the careful thought necessary to assess them rigorously. Others have been pressured into compliance by administrative mechanisms and compulsory training programs in academic, government, and commercial sectors, which impose CSJ’s vision for social change via speech codes, hiring practices, community guidelines, and so on. Many have been deceived by CSJ’s professed desire to pursue ideals such as “diversity,” “equity,” and “inclusion,” which appear superficially laudable, but which have in fact been redefined by CSJ so that they function as linguistic Trojan

Horses for toxic ideological content.

The CREC is determined to resist the ideology of CSJ and the activism it produces. It is not that we deny there is injustice in our society. Quite the contrary. Clearly, there is a history of racism in the Western world and beyond, and such prejudice – along with sexism, xenophobia, and ungodly discrimination of every kind – tragically persists today in many contexts. We stand against all such sins, provided that the definitions and boundaries of such sins are established by Scripture alone, and not from the lexicons of Critical Theory. The problem with CSJ is not its claim that there is injustice in our world, but rather its inaccurate portrayal of the history of this injustice, its catastrophically mistaken philosophical analysis, its flawed diagnosis of the present situation, and its proposed solutions which will, to the extent that they are implemented, merely make the situation incalculably worse.

We are committed to tackling the injustices in our society not by embracing CSJ's vision of social transformation, but by seeking to shape our lives by the teaching of Scripture as individuals and Churches. We recognize that temptations to sin lurk within the heart of every one of us, and that these may include the sins of malice, prejudice, and vainglory, whether racial, sexual, tribal, or national. We are committed to lives of ongoing repentance from these and all our sins. We seek the forgiveness that is found in Christ and the renewal of God's Spirit, so that we may be reconciled with our Heavenly Father and with one another within the body of Christ. We long to see a world in which justice prevails in every corner of society, and we are convinced that this will take place as the Spirit of God works in and through the Church, and as we all take responsibility for living day by day as faithful disciples of Christ. We invite you to join us.

Proposals for New Memorials

PMOC Hurt Note: Knox and Hus Presbyteries have proposed the following Memorials. I have created a committee of members from each of these Presbyteries to attempt to reduce these three proposals to one or two agreed upon memorials.

Knox Presbytery On Ethnic Balance

We believe the human tendency to congregate around shared affections is natural and can be good—it creates the blessing of cultures and subcultures, for example. But as with all natural goods in a fallen world, there is a temptation to exalt it to a position of unbiblical importance, thus making it an idol. While an ethnic heritage is something to be grateful for, and which may be preserved in any way consistent with the law of God, it is important to reject every form of identity politics, including kinism—whether malicious, vainglorious, or ideologically separatist/segregationist.

Knox Presbytery On Anti-Semitism

We believe the conversion of the Jews is key to the success of Christ's Great Commission, and it is incumbent upon us to pray and labor toward that end. While, apart from Christ, the Jews are as all others--alienated from God--they have remained an object of God's care because the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. God's plan for converting them is for them to see Gentile nations under the blessings of Christ's lordship, thus leading them to long for the same. Hence, the cancerous sin of anti-Semitism has no place in God's plan.

Hus Presbytery Memorial on Nations

(Filed by Mitaka Evangelical Church, Tokyo, Japan; Hus Presbytery)

We believe God made all nations from one man, Adam. These nations were sundered by sin. But God, by the cross of Christ and the outpouring of his Holy Spirit at Pentecost, has and is reuniting and reconciling the nations, drawing them into one Church, the Body of Christ. We, therefore, detest and repudiate all forms of nationalistic and racial hatred, prejudice, segregation, discrimination, and persecution, including anti-Semitism, white supremacy, kinism, oikophobia, and Critical Race Theory. We seek to unite the nations in the worship of the triune God, sanctifying all peoples, languages, and customs to His glory.

A proposal from Augustine Presbytery.

We move that Council approve the formation of a new presbytery from the member churches presently in Augustine.

The new presbytery would be made up of the 11 churches in Pennsylvania, New York, New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts. The name of the new presbytery would be called Bucer.

The geographic bounds of Augustine Presbytery would then be Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Maryland. (14 churches).

Committee Report to Knox Presbytery on Dividing into Two Presbyteries Submitted on _____ to PM Gene Helsel for Consideration

Charge from the Spring 2023 Knox Presbytery:

For the Knox Presiding Minister to form a committee that shall make a proposal on the following: propose a plan on the division of Knox Presbytery including which churches go where, and joint meeting model and to coordinate with [the] presiding minister of CREC. The committee will make a report to be circulated before the next Presbytery meeting and to be taken up at Council.

Members of Committee: Terrance Tollefson (Christ Covenant Church, OR) (Chair), Stuart Bryan (Trinity Church, ID), Ben Zornes (Christ Church, ID), Desmond Jones (Trinity Covenant Church, BC), Alan Burrow (King's Congregation, ID), Brian Brown (Trinity Denver Church, CO), Brad Donovan (Christ Covenant of Church of Grande Prairie), Ryan Handermann (Trinity Reformed Church, ID)

Proposal

The committee proposes that Knox Presbytery be divided into two presbyteries at Council 2023. The churches in Washington, Canada, and northern Idaho will retain the name Knox Presbytery. The churches in Colorado, Montana, Oregon, and southern Idaho will form a new presbytery with a new name. (This committee recommends two options, to be approved by presbytery and Council: Kuyper or Edwards). The geographical dividing line will be through the center of Moscow (see below for the detailed list).

This committee further proposes that the presiding ministers of each presbytery commit to coordinating presbytery meetings together (i.e. in the same town) at least until Council

of 2026. The PM of the new presbytery will be Joshua Appel, and Knox presbytery will vote to decide their next PM. We also recommend that Knox Presbytery and the new presbytery each pass a resolution encouraging the Idaho churches to continue to work together in the political and cultural arena of Idaho, e.g., through the Idaho Family Policy Center.

Rationale

This committee makes this proposal based on the feedback we received at Presbytery and the recommendations set forth in the Constitution. This proposal combines larger and smaller churches, as well as churches newer to the CREC with churches that have been in the CREC for a long time (“greybeard churches”) (7.A.1.c.ii & iv). This particular division retains a balance of experienced pastors and elders in each presbytery who have a historic understanding of the CREC governing documents and culture (7.A.1.c.iii). It also achieves an even distribution of churches (7.A.1.c.i). While this requires a split of the state of Idaho, it also achieves a simple geographical division (7.A.1.c.v), and calls the Idaho churches to continue to work together in their state..

While the constitution does not require us to split up now, it recommends forming a new presbytery at around 20 churches. It does require that this formation be ratified at Council (7.A.1.b). Given that we have 5-7 mission churches and church plants on the horizon, if we wait until Council 2026 to divide, this would mean our presbytery might potentially grow far beyond the trigger number for a new presbytery. Of course, if the Lord continues to bless us with more churches, there may be more new presbyteries on the horizon, but attempting to plan for such an eventuality lies beyond the charge of this committee. The committee considered several other geographical divisions, but the committee considers these other options to be inferior because they do not achieve an equitable division of greybeards in each presbytery, nor do they equally distribute the number of churches.

Knox	Kuyper or Edwards
<p>Idaho Trinity Church Coeur d'Alene, Idaho USA</p> <p>Christ Church Moscow, Idaho USA</p>	<p>Idaho Trinity Reformed Church Moscow, Idaho USA</p> <p>The King’s Congregation</p>

King's Cross Church
Moscow, Idaho USA

Canada

***Covenant Presbyterian
Church Cochrane, Alberta
Canada*

Trinity Covenant
Church Fort St. John,
BC Canada

Christ Covenant Church of Grande
Prairie Grande Prairie, Alberta Canada

Washington

Christ Church
Spokane, Washington USA

King's Cross Church
Wenatchee, Washington USA

Holy Trinity Church
Colville, Washington USA

***King's Church
Spokane Valley, Washington USA*

***Holy Covenant
Church Colbert,
Washington, USA*

Nebraska

**Christ
Church
Omaha, NE
USA*

Meridian, Idaho USA

Valley Covenant
Church Lewiston,
Idaho USA

***Palouse Fellowship
Moscow, Idaho USA*

Colorado

Redeemer Community Church
Centennial, Colorado USA

Trinity Church Denver
Denver, Colorado USA

**The Well
Boulder, Colorado*

**Christ Church,
Denver, CO*

Oregon

Christ Covenant
Church Enterprise,
Oregon USA

Montana

Christ Covenant Reformed
Church Billings, Montana USA

Christ Church
Missoula
Missoula,
Montana USA

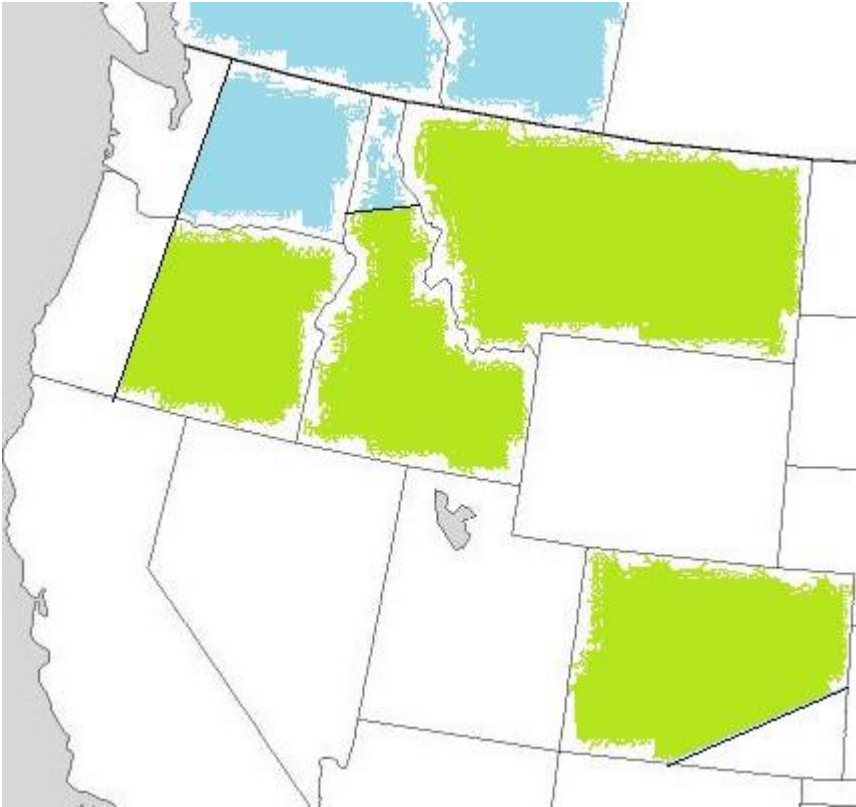
Emmanuel
Church Helena,
Montana USA

Brazil

**Protestant Reformed Church*

*Potential candidate churches **Current mission churches *** Current Candidate church

Proposed division represented geographically:



CREC Constitution - Article IV.C

C. Work and Authority of the Presiding Minister

1. Broader Assemblies shall elect a Presiding Minister from their assembled delegates when that office is vacant. In the event that no more than one Council delegate is willing or able to serve or is nominated as Presiding Minister of Council, the assembled presbytery delegates also shall be eligible for nomination as Presiding Minister of Council.

2. The Presiding Ministers of Presbytery and Council serve three-year terms. They assume authority and responsibilities following

adjournment of the assembly meeting at which they are elected, which concludes the term of their predecessor.

3. All nominations for the position of Presiding Minister should be pre-posted on the agenda. If no nominations are received prior to the posting of the agenda, nominations may be made from the floor of the assembly. Upon the establishment of a new presbytery, Council shall assign a year to begin the three- year rotation for the election of the Presiding Minister of that presbytery. The presbytery shall have the discretion to have its first Presiding Minister serve one or two additional years in order to meet this rotation requirement.

4. Term limitation

a) No Presiding Minister of Presbytery may serve two consecutive terms as Presiding Minister unless no qualified candidate is willing to serve (1 Peter 5:1–4). In such cases a two-thirds vote can extend the term of the current Presiding Minister.

b) The Presiding Minister of Council may be elected to a second consecutive term by a two-thirds vote of Council. A Presiding Minister of Council may not be elected to a third consecutive term unless the Council determines by a three-fourths majority that the circumstances are extraordinary.

5. Each Presiding Minister shall be concurrently serving as a member of the local session. If a Presiding Minister ceases to serve in such a local office, then his term as Presiding Minister ceases at that time. Before his term is completed, a Presiding Minister may resign his position, or he may be removed by a three- fourths vote of the assembly.

6. Presiding Ministers *pro tempore*

a) Assemblies shall also elect a Presiding Minister *Pro Tempore*, to serve in cases of the Presiding Minister's absence, or to fill out the term of the Presiding Minister if the office of Presiding Minister becomes vacant.

b) When Council elects a Presiding Minister *Pro Tempore*, he shall also serve as Assistant to the Presiding Minister of Council.

7. Presiding Ministers properly act on behalf of the broader assemblies when actions have been declared in writing by the Presiding Minister and

then included in that Minister's written report to the next duly constituted meeting of the broader assembly. At the meeting, the Presiding Minister's report must be received and acted upon by the broader assembly in accordance with the procedure described in the Meeting Protocols.

8. With regard to meetings, the Presiding Ministers of Presbytery and Council have the following authority and responsibilities: to prepare agendas, chair the meetings, submit reports of their work, call *ad hoc* meetings when necessary, and prepare minutes of the meetings to be posted in public. In addition, the Presiding Minister of Church Council shall bear the responsibility for maintaining a true and accurate copy of the CREC Constitution, reflecting all amendments and additions thereto, and for making the Constitution available by means of electronic publishing.

9. The Presiding Minister of Presbytery and Council is also a spokesman and representative, whose authority and responsibilities in that capacity are as follows:

a) First, between meetings of the broader assembly, the Presiding Minister represents the broader assembly by initiating and taking prudent steps in furtherance of an action, which he must report to the broader assembly for ratification. In this way, the Presiding Minister represents the broader assembly for any action empowered to that assembly by this constitution, except for the following: admitting members; amending confessional or governmental standards; making formal recommendations (whether for or against) ministerial candidates for ordination; removing a member church; requiring arbitration; and adjudicating a trial.

b) Second, as representative of Presbytery or Council, the Presiding Minister has the authority to encourage and spiritually strengthen the sessions of elders within his broader assembly, meet with the Presiding Ministers of other broader assemblies, both within and without the CREC, to encourage them or to be encouraged, and to inquire about the spiritual and doctrinal health of other broader assemblies as well as the churches within his own assembly.

c) Third, Presiding Ministers are to act according to the authority conferred to them by virtue of their office and all

their actions are to be confined and limited to the authority specified by the Constitution of the CREC. They shall report to Presbytery or Council on their work as spokesman and representative. Additionally, prior to a Presiding Minister censuring a CREC church or officer he must receive approval from two other Presiding Ministers.

d) Fourth, Presiding Ministers have the discretion and authority to appoint courts, assistants, clerks, or, when the Presiding Minister *Pro Tempore* is not available, chairmen of assemblies, on a case-by-case basis.

e) Fifth, under the circumstances listed below, the Presiding Minister of Presbytery shall have authority to appoint a temporary *pro tempore* Session for a local member church within his Presbytery.

1. If an elder or pastor, having been convicted by a local church court of an offense that calls for his resignation, refuse to resign, the Presiding Minister may appoint additional *pro tempore* members to the local Session to bring the total number of members of that Session to a minimum of three, excluding the recalcitrant member, provided the existing Session has fewer than three members, excluding the recalcitrant member;

2. If the resignation of one or more elders (or the pastor) would result in a reduction of the number of elders (including the pastor) on the Session to one, the resignation(s) shall not be accepted by the single remaining elder.

A. The remaining elder shall immediately contact the Presiding Minister to request the appointment of *pro tempore* elders so that a plural Session may consider the proffered resignation(s);

B. If the resignation(s) is (are) accepted, the appointed *pro tempore* elders shall serve, together with the remaining local elder, as part of a temporary form of government for the congregation;

C. If the appointed *pro tempore* elders are to function as the temporary Session beyond the time period required to consider the acceptance of previously proffered resignations, they must receive approval by a plurality vote of the voting members of the congregation. If any member of the *pro tempore* Session fails to receive the required number of approving votes, the Presiding Minister shall appoint replacement *pro tempore* member(s) to replace those that were not approved;

D. Having been approved by the congregation, the *pro tempore* Session shall continue in place until one of the following occurs:

i) A plural Session of local elders is installed in accordance with the local church's constitution; or

ii) The church comes under the care of another CREC member church in accordance with Article II.C of this Constitution.

CREC Constitution - Article IV.D

D. Referrals, Appeals
and Complaints 1.

General

Provisions.

a) Referrals, Appeals and Complaints filed under the provisions of this Article are subject to adjudication by a Court, duly appointed by the Presiding Minister of the broader assembly to which the action is filed.

i) Presbytery Courts shall consist of no fewer than three members, all of whom must be duly ordained and installed CREC ministers or elders of a local CREC congregation.

ii) Council Courts shall consist of no fewer than five

members, all of whom must be Council delegates who have been elected by their respective presbyteries as representatives to Council.

b) The Presiding Minister who appoints a Court shall not serve as a member of that Court, nor shall he participate in the deliberations of the Court. He shall be available to the Court to give advice concerning process issues, but deciding the matter is solely within the authority of duly appointed members of the Court, acting as a body.

c) All actions arising from this Article at the Presbytery level shall first be heard and adjudicated by a duly appointed Court of that Presbytery. At the recommendation of the Court, the action may result in a presbyterial trial.

d) The final decision to elevate a matter to a presbyterial trial rests within the sole discretion of the Presiding Minister of that Presbytery. Except under extraordinary circumstances, only an action that may result in the defrocking of a CREC minister would be elevated to a presbyterial trial. When held, presbyterial trials shall be conducted in accordance with provisions set forth in the CREC Book of Procedures.

2. Finality of local church decisions.

Issues relating to the local congregation which may lawfully be brought before the broader assemblies are specified in this section. Except in the case of referrals, appeals, or complaints authorized and accepted under this section, all local church decisions are final and may not be reviewed by the broader assemblies (Presbytery or Council). Nothing in this section prevents local churches from seeking, or the broader assemblies from offering, informal counsel and advice. To the contrary, it is strongly encouraged as the best way of avoiding needless appeals and referrals.

3. Referrals.

A referral is a written request by a local church Session or any member of the Session 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 member of a church Session or Presbytery 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.

4. Appeals.

a) **Definition:** An appeal is an action brought by a person or persons who are or were members of a local CREC congregation (including mission congregations), against whom a formal action has been taken by a local CREC church Session or a CREC presbyterial court and who are aggrieved by such formal action. It constitutes a request for removal of jurisdiction from one court to the next higher court.

b) Any member or former member of a CREC church shall possess a right of appeal regarding judicial actions of which he may be or was the subject. All matters must be adjudicated at the level of the local church before an appeal may be made. ~~An Any appeal is normally shall be filed with the Presbytery of which the local congregation is a member. However, an appeal may be made directly to Council. In such a case, the Presiding Minister of Council may, in his sole discretion, remand the case to the Presbytery from which it arises.~~ At the conclusion of the matter at the Presbytery level, either party retains the right to make further appeal to Council.

c) The broader assemblies, through the Presiding Minister, must refuse to hear frivolous or unconstitutional appeals. The Presiding Minister is also free to deny an appeal if the appellant has overtly discredited himself in his manner of bringing the appeal or if the judicial action appealed resulted in harmless error.

d) A simple majority of the Court is necessary to decide the issue on behalf of a Presbytery or Council. The decision of a Council Court 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 may be appealed to a future Council, though the future Council is not obligated to hear such an appeal.

5. Complaints.

- a) **Definition:** A complaint is a request for a judicial decision to be made against a current CREC individual member or assembly on a charge that has not been adjudicated either because the local assembly refused to hear the case, the local assembly resolved the case without formal action, the local assembly is one of the parties charged, or the complainant is from outside the CREC.
- b) Complaints against individuals must be first addressed at the local church level. If the matter is resolved by a formal action of the Session, the right of appeal set forth in Subsection 3 may be invoked. If formal action has been taken by a CREC assembly the matter is an appeal not a complaint.
- c) A complaint against a CREC assembly may not be brought except on the testimony of two or three witnesses. To be considered separate testimony, the witnesses may not be husband and wife.
- d) A complaint against the Session of a local church may be brought to a court above the local level only under the following circumstances:
- i. when the Session of elders is accused of participating in or tolerating grievous dishonesty in subscription to the doctrinal or constitutional standards of the local church; or
 - ii. when the Session of elders is accused of gross misbehavior.
- e) When accusations of grievous dishonesty or gross misbehavior on the part of the Session of a local church are made to or from other local churches or presented to the Presiding Minister of Presbytery or Council, the Session under accusation must be promptly informed. However, irresponsible accusations must be rejected and the member making the complaint should be directed back to his own Session.
- f) If a complaint is brought against a CREC assembly by someone who is not a member of a CREC church, the CREC, in Presbytery, Council, or through its appropriate Presiding Minister, can agree to hear the case if all of the following conditions have been met:
- i. The Presiding Minister has established that one or more of the conditions in IV.D.5.a applies.
 - ii. The Presiding Minister has established that the government of the church where the complainant is a member affirms the truth of the
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Apostles' Creed, and is willing to give due weight, respect and consideration to the decision of the CREC. To satisfy this requirement, the affirmation must be set forth in a document and submitted to the Presiding Minister.

iii. The charges as framed have two or three available and accountable witnesses listed for each specified complaint. To be considered separate testimony, the witnesses may not be husband and wife.

iv. The complainant and his church have not overtly discredited themselves in the manner of bringing the charges.

g) The broader assemblies must refuse to hear frivolous or unconstitutional complaints. ~~Complaints presented to Council do not necessarily have to be first heard by Presbytery. However, Council, acting in Session or through the Presiding Minister, may choose to remand the case to Presbytery.~~

6. The decisions of the assemblies with regard to the local congregation are spiritually authoritative. If the elders of a particular congregation choose to refuse the instruction of the broader church, the congregation may do so without deprivation of property. However, if their disregard of godly counsel is particularly egregious, the congregation may be removed from membership in the CREC, in accordance with constitutional procedure.

7. After a fair and open hearing at Presbytery, a congregation may be removed from membership in the Presbytery by a two-thirds vote of the Presbytery. Upon such occasions, the removed congregation retains the full right of appeal to Council.

CREC BOP - Article IX

[Note: Articles IX and X of the BOP are hereby repealed and reenacted as a single Article IX, with a new title. Subsequent Articles of the BOP to be renumbered accordingly.]

Article IX. Procedures for CREC Courts and Trials

A. General Court procedures

1. Review the charges before the Court, filed by the Appellant or Complainant. If there are multiple elements to the Appeal or Complaint, these should be parsed so each element can be considered individually as well as corporately. Ultimately, the

Court should rule individually on each element, as appropriate, as well as handing down a ruling on the totality of the Appeal or Complaint.

2. If the person or persons accused in the Complaint or the defending parties in an Appeal have not already filed a Response when the Court receives the matter, the Court should immediately request a Response. Usually, Respondents (they might also be termed "Defendants") will have been notified by the presiding officer that an Appeal or Complaint has been filed (as required by the CREC Constitution) prior to the Court receiving the Complaint. This sometimes will result in a response being transmitted to the Court along with the Appeal or Complaint at the time the Court is appointed. In such a case, the Court will not need to request a Response. However, if the Court does not already have the Response in hand, the Court shall set a reasonable deadline for the Response to be filed.
3. If Appellant or Complainant did not specify the desired relief in the Appeal or Complaint, the Court shall request that the file a "Petition for Relief" as a separated document, and set a reasonable deadline for delivery. This request should be sent to Appellant or Complainant as soon as possible after the Court is appointed. This document gives the Court direction to know what manner of relief is being sought, so the Court can tailor its inquiry to see whether such relief is justified by the Complaint. It will help dictate the scope of the Court's examination of the case. The Court is not bound by the terms of the Petition for Relief. It may grant or deny such petition in whole or in part, or it may substitute its own judgment as to the appropriate relief in the case.
4. Deadlines set by the Court are to be complied with by the parties. Any Ruling that may subsequently be issued may not be set at jeopardy because of a party's failure to provide requested documents in a timely manner.

B. Appellate Procedures

1. Amidst any appeals procedure within the CREC,

reconciliation between parties will remain a central objective. Such reconciliation may render it unnecessary to press these procedures through to completion.

2. The Presiding Minister of the appropriate judicatory will determine whether a party is qualified to bring an appeal.
3. Appellant shall notify both the Respondent and the Presiding Minister of the appropriate judicatory of his intent to appeal within four weeks of the decision he is appealing.
4. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Presiding Minister per his instructions, and the Appellant must supply to the Respondent a copy of all materials relevant to his appeal.
5. Once an appeal is submitted, it cannot be withdrawn without the approval of the Presiding Minister.
6. The Presiding Minister may seek the counsel of other presbyters to assist in his decision to hear or dismiss the case.
7. If the Presiding Minister decides to allow the case to move forward, he shall appoint a court of at least three presbyters (representing at least three different CREC churches, excluding conflicts of interest, with no more than two from any one church) to hear the appeal and to render a decision. The Court's decision will be regarded as the decision of presbytery, unless it is nullified by the full presbytery.
8. The Court shall report its findings to the full presbytery. By vote, the presbytery will either sustain or, if there is cause, nullify the court's decision.

C. Presbytery Trials

1. Establishment of Judicatory
 - a. All presbyters are voting members of the judicatory with the exception of those who, due to conflict of interest, are removed from the judicatory by a three-fourths majority of presbytery.
 - b. Should the Presiding Minister be removed for a conflict of interest, presbytery shall elect a Presiding Minister *pro tempore* to moderate the hearing.
2. Introduction to the case
 - a. A written complaint (including any charges or

- specifications), provided by the Complainant, is published to each member of the judicatory and read by the Presiding Minister.
- b. Here or at any later point in the introduction to the case, any member of the judicatory, upon being recognized by the Chair, may interject a motion to dismiss the case. If the motion carried by a three-fourths majority, the hearing will not proceed and the matter will be regarded as settled. The presbytery will not hear frivolous matters.
 - c. The Presiding Minister invites the Complainant to introduce the matter.
 - d. The Presiding Minister invites the Respondent to introduce the matter.
3. The Presiding Minister (or his designee) charges the parties, witnesses, and the judicatory from the Scriptures, and then opens the hearing with prayer.
 4. Presentation of Complainant's case.
 - a. The Complainant calls a witness, directs him by questioning, and members of the judicatory may follow up with questions of their own.
 - b. The witness may then be examined by the Respondent, followed by another invitation to questions from the judicatory.
 - c. If the Complainant wishes to redirect the witness, he may do so, but the same opportunities for follow-up questions must be provided.
 - d. The Complainant may present any documentary or physical evidence during the course of his presentation. When the Complainant concludes his presentation, the judicatory may again pose final questions to the Complainant or to any of his witnesses.
 5. At this point, any member of the judicatory may interject a motion to dismiss the case. If the motion carried by a three-fourths majority, the hearing will end and the matter will be regarded as settled.
 6. Presentation of Respondent's Case – Respondent's presentation is patterned after the Complainant's presentation as described above.
 7. The Presiding Minister invites the judicatory to ask any further

questions of any available witness.

8. Deliberation and Judgment

- a. Deliberation shall begin with a prayer.
- b. Judgment requires a simple majority of the judicatory.
- c. Minority opinions, if formally offered, must be received into the record.

9. Closing prayer is offered by the Presiding Minister or his designee.

CREC Constitution – Article II

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

B. Within the CREC each elder and pastor must be a member of the church in which he serves. This requirement may be waived on a case-by-case basis by a unanimous vote of the presbytery.

C. Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Jas. 5:14). Congregations without a plurality of elders must have accountability with another established CREC church.

D. Each congregation will be served as possible by a plurality of deacons (Acts 6:5–7; 1 Tim. 3:8–13).

E. The CREC affirms the need for spiritually-disciplined, well-educated pastors, qualified in their households, grounded in rigorous and wise handling of the Scriptures, and exhibiting a thorough understanding of the biblical world and life view (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Tit. 1:5–9).

F. Any candidate for pastor, regardless of his level of formal education, ~~will~~ shall be examined before ordination (See Article IV.A.2.g). The candidate ~~will~~ shall be examined by a local session of elders with regard to his manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The presbytery ~~will~~ shall also examine him with regard to his manner of life, knowledge of Scripture, and doctrinal understanding. The presbytery may or may not recommend his ordination to the session of the local congregation. The local session is not judicially bound by the recommendation of presbytery. If a local session does not abide by the presbytery recommendation, then the presbytery may or may not initiate proceedings according to Article IV.D.5.

G. If a pastor has already been ordained within the CREC, he may not be required to undergo a complete re-examination by another Presbytery (see BOP XI & Appendix B). If a man has been ordained outside the CREC, the local congregation ought to seek the wisdom of the presbytery in the examination of his ministerial credentials and views (see BOP XI & Appendix B).

H. If a church ~~holding~~ having the 4-office views system would like desire the ordination of a teacher to be recognized on a broader scale within the CREC, comparable to the way the ordination of a pastor or minister currently is, such a church may request a modified examination of that man by Presbytery.

I. All institutions and processes of ministerial education and training that are formally associated with the CREC must be governed under the authority and supervision of a local Session of elders in a local CREC church (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

CREC Constitution – Article III.D

D. Each church ~~will~~ shall adopt into its statement of faith the Confessional Statement on Sex, Gender, and Marriage adopted by CREC Council on August 26, 2020 (See Article XII), and incorporated into the CREC Constitution at Article XII.

CREC Constitution – Article III.K

K. After sending at least one candidate delegation to a stated meeting of presbytery and having been seated as a Candidate Church, a church may be admitted to membership in a Presbytery by a two-thirds vote of the Presbytery at its next stated meeting. The Presbytery shall normally examine the pastor-elder delegation, especially with regard to their confessional status, sound doctrine, submission to CREC authority, and desire to uphold other CREC churches with all peace and love. They may remove themselves by whatever means their respective constitutions allow. When a church joins the CREC, this entire document through Article X must be adopted into that church's constitutional documents, according to the constitutional processes and standards of that church. The membership of the local church in the CREC is finalized at that point, and not before. New members shall make vows to the faithfulness and commitment to the churches and standards of the CREC. Likewise, current members shall pledge to uphold the new church in

prayer and love.

END CONSENT AGENDA

CREC Constitution – Article IV.A

A. General Provisions

1. There are two broader assemblies in the CREC: the Presbytery and the Church Council. A minimum of two local churches is necessary to establish a presbytery. Geographical boundaries of presbyteries may overlap, but in considering this, presbyteries are urged to remember the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12; 3 John 9).
2. The authority of the broader assemblies of the CREC is set forth in various parts of this Constitution. The assemblies shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner and hence their authority includes the following powers:
 - a) to hold ~~regular~~ stated and *ad hoc* meetings;
 - b) to amend their standards following due process;
 - c) to designate *ad hoc* committees;
 - d) to address matters referred to them by the session of a member church or by another CREC broader assembly;
 - e) to formulate plans of action concerning matters common to the churches;
 - f) to admit new churches into membership;
 - g) to evaluate men for ordination (see BOP XI & Appendix B).
 - h) to inquire into the spiritual health of member churches and to confer with other assemblies to this end;
 - i) to offer a timely pastoral voice to public issues of common concern;
 - 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;
 - l) to protect its own purity and peace through judicial action following due process;
 - m) to censure or expel a member church following due process;
 - n) by two-thirds majority vote and pending judicial process, censure a member church or a CREC officer. A censure under this provision does not affect a member church's voting rights or appeal rights in the broader

assemblies.

3. No broader assembly may own property. All property within the CREC will be owned by the local congregations. General costs associated with hosting a broader assembly will be borne by a geographic host church or churches of the broader assembly where that assembly is meeting. Specifically for Council, Presbyteries of the CREC shall make a good faith effort to reimburse the host church. Specific costs (e.g. food and travel) will be borne by the delegates or their sending churches.
4. The assemblies may form no standing committees or boards. Every committee must be *ad hoc* and automatically dissolve when it completes its assigned task, or submits its assigned report to the assembly. Assigned tasks may not be open-ended, allowing for *de facto* standing committees.
5. All retirement or pension plans for CREC ministers, teachers, missionaries, etc. will be under the authority, management and oversight of the local churches, and will not be the responsibility of the broader assemblies.
6. Books of Procedures
 - a) The broader assemblies shall keep a Book of Procedures that details particular methods for carrying out the various constitutionally-sanctioned tasks of an assembly. The broader assemblies are informed by the Book of Procedures, but not bound to it. Should an assembly act in exception to the Book of Procedures, the exception must be acknowledged and explained in the minutes. The Book of Procedures may be altered or amended at any time by a simple majority of an assembly. The various presbyteries may modify their respective Books of Procedures between meetings of council. Each meeting of council will review these various modifications and harmonize the various Books of Procedures, in accordance with the provisions of the CREC Council Book of Procedures. Presbyteries may then approve further modifications for their own use, to be followed in turn by conciliar review. Maintenance and publication of a current Book of Procedures is the responsibility of the Presiding Minister.
 - b) The Book of Procedures maintained by each Presbytery will utilize a standardized format, based upon the CREC Council Book of Procedures, with local practice set out separately by Article. The portion of the Presbytery Books of Procedure that is based upon the CREC Council Book of Procedures will be updated in conformity with the Council

Book of Procedures as it is updated.

- c) Each Presiding Minister of Presbytery will ensure that the numbering of the Book of Procedures he is responsible for maintaining is consistent with the Council Book of Procedures, which will require the renumbering of Articles which appear only on a local basis.

- 7. Assemblies may from time to time address issues not included in the historic creeds and confessions by means of overtures, memorials (see Article IX), or confessional statements.

CREC Constitution - Article V

A. The Presbytery must hold at least one stated meeting each calendar year. Each presbytery shall individually determine the number of stated meetings it shall hold per year, providing that the determination is made and announced prior to January 1, of each year.

B. As provided in Article IV of this Constitution, the Presiding Minister has the authority to call an *ad hoc* meeting of his respective assembly. However, if two-thirds of the church submit a written request to the Presiding Minister, an *ad hoc* presbytery meeting will be called. The decision to call for an *ad hoc* meeting of the Presbytery cannot be made at a stated meeting of Presbytery.

C. The Council will have a stated meeting every three years. In the year that Council meets, Presbyteries must have ~~their annual~~ a stated meeting at the same place and time. If two thirds of the Presbyteries submit a written request to the Presiding Minister of Council, an *ad hoc* Council meeting can be called. The decision to call for an *ad hoc* meeting of Council cannot be made at a triennial Council meeting. The requirement that Presbyteries convene at the same place and time as Council does not apply to *ad hoc* meetings of Council.

[No amendments are proposed for the remainder of Article V]

Hus Constitutional Committee

Members: Rev. Attila Hajdu, Rev. Ben Zedek Smith (chairman), Rev. Dr. Sebastian Smolarz

Proposal #1

Addition to the Preamble of the Constitution after the sentence: “We use the word Communion in its common sense of being participants in one particular body gathered within the broader body, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.”

New addition: “As a Communion, we recognize the ordination of all the ministers of our churches. Additionally, we recognize the baptisms of all the members of our churches, and we receive at the Lord’s Table all communicant members of our churches.”

Proposed reading: “We use the word Communion in its common sense of being participants in one particular body gathered within the broader body, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As a Communion, we recognize the ordination of all the ministers of our churches. Additionally, we recognize the baptisms of all the members of our churches, and we receive at the Lord’s Table all communicant members of our churches.”

Rationale: The proposed addition clarifies the nature of the communion we form together as churches.

Proposal #2

Hus Presbytery is asking the Council/PMoC to establish a committee that would propose a common confession of faith for all the CREC churches (apart from the individual confessions that each church adopts). That could be an old confession, like the New Confession of Faith from 1654 (see: Appendix 1), or a new, yet similar in content, confession drafted by the committee. All the CREC churches would then adopt the confession as a common confession for all the CREC churches.

Rationale: A common confession adopted by all the CREC churches would underline the confessional unity of the CREC and, together with the mutual recognition of ordination and the sacraments, would express the full communion of our confederated churches as a communion of pulpit and table.

Appendix #1

New Confession of Faith (1654)

I. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God and the only rule of knowing Him savingly, and living unto Him in all holiness and righteousness, in which we must rest; which Scriptures, whoever does not believe but rejects them, does instead thereof take himself to any other way of discovering the mind of God, cannot be saved.

II. There is one only God, who is a Spirit, all-sufficient, eternal, infinite, unchangeable, almighty, omniscient, just, merciful, most holy, good, true, faithful and only wise; working all things according to the counsel of His own will; the creator, governor and judge of the world. The knowledge of God by faith is necessary to salvation and every other way of knowledge of Him is insufficient to salvation.

III. That this God is infinitely distinct from all creatures in His being and blessedness.

IV. That this God is one in three persons or subsistences—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

V. God made man upright in His own image to yield obedience to Him, so that the chief end of man is to live to God and enjoy Him forever.

VI. Man who was thus created is fallen into a state of sin and misery; so that our nature is wholly corrupted, disabled to all that is spiritually good, in bondage to sin, at enmity with God, prone to all that is evil; and while we continue in that estate, the wrath of God abides upon us.

VII. That every transgression of the law of God is sin, the wages whereof is eternal death.

VIII. That God out of His love sent Jesus Christ to be the only mediator between God and man, without the knowledge of whom, by the revelation of the gospel, there is no salvation.

IX. That this Jesus Christ is God by nature, the only and eternally begotten Son of the Father, and also true man in one person.

X. That this Jesus Christ is our redeemer and surety, who, dying in our stead, laying down His life a ransom for us and bearing our sins, has made full satisfaction for them.

XI. That this Lord Jesus Christ is He that was crucified at Jerusalem, was buried, rose again and ascended into heaven, and there sits at the right hand of God, making intercession for us, who remains forever a distinct person from all saints and angels, notwithstanding their union and communion with Him.

XII. All true believers are partakers of Jesus Christ and all His benefits freely by grace, and are justified by faith in Him and not by works, He being made of God righteousness unto us.

XIII. That no man can be saved unless he is born again of the Holy Spirit, repents, believes, and walks in holy conversation and godliness.

XIV. That whosoever does not prize and love Jesus Christ above himself and all other things, cannot be saved.

XV. Whosoever allows himself to live in any known sin, upon any pretense or principle whatsoever, is in a state of damnation.

XVI. That God is to be worshipped according to His own will, and that only in and through Jesus Christ.

XVII. That all the dead shall rise again.

XVIII. That in the last day, God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ

and reward every one according to his works.

XIX. That all believers shall be translated into an everlasting state of blessedness and an inheritance of glory in the kingdom of heaven.

XX. That all the wicked and unbelievers shall be cast into everlasting torments with the devil and his angels in hell.

Beginning in 1652, John Owen (1616–1683) was a prominent member of the Rump Parliament Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel. That committee, which featured prominent Independents/Congregationalists, had drafted *The Principles of Faith* (1652; reprinted Nov. 2, 1654). When Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) dissolved the Rump (April 20, 1653), the first Protectorate Parliament (September 3, 1654) established a committee to determine the limits of toleration in religion. Owen was once again a key member, but Parliament added Presbyterian figures to the Congregational theologians (Owen, Goodwin, Nye, and Simpson)—notably, Richard Vines (1600–1655/56), Thomas Manton (1620–1677), Stephen Marshall (ca. 1594–1655), and Francis Cheynell (1608–1665). Richard Baxter (1615–1691), also a member, remains a quandary due to his Neonomian doctrine of justification and his eclectic ecclesiology. The confession they drafted survives in only one extant copy, which originally belonged to George Thomason (†1666) of “Thomason Tracts” fame. His copy is now in the British Library, sans cover or title page. That deficiency is covered by a manuscript copy of the absent page from Thomason’s hand.¹

As was the case with the *Principles of Faith* (1652), Parliament took no action to implement this succinct declaration. Perhaps this is due (once more) to the dissolution of a parliamentary body by Cromwell—the Lord Protector dissolved the first Protectorate Parliament on January 22, 1655.

It has been suggested that the motivation for this and the previous 1652 summary of Christian principles was related to the English translation and publication of the Socinian Racovian Catechism (1652).² This would explain the Trinitarian language of these brief post-Westminster declarations. And yet such orthodox language would be generic to any statement of Christian essentials. Perhaps more telling is the language of “ransom” in reference to Christ’s atoning death. That term would have been anathema to Socinians, whose exemplaristic view of Christ’s death on the cross eschews any notion of propitiation or satisfaction of divine justice.

Why this confession was produced on the heels of the republication of the 1652 *Principles* a month prior is not clear. Apparently, the committee, now enhanced with Presbyterian brethren, felt a fresh start was necessary. While it uses several clauses from the former document, it also enlarges and adds a number of doctrinal articles and reflections not found in the previous *Principles*. Thus it is indeed a “new confession.”

The full title of the work is *A new Confession of Faith, or the first principles of the Christian Religion necessary to be laid as a foundation by all such as desire to build on unto*

perfection. Represented by a Committee of Divines... unto the grand Committee for Religion as fitt to be owned by all such Ministers as are or shall be allowed to receive the publique maintenance for their works in the Ministry. Propounded to the Parliament, 12 Dec. A transcript is found in T. M. Lawrence, "Transmission and Transformation: Thomas Goodwin and the Puritan Project, 1600–1704," PhD diss. (2002), 224–27.

1 Cf. Catalogue of the Pamphlets, Books, Newspapers, and Manuscripts Relating to the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and Restoration, Collected by George Thomason, 1640–1661, 2:1, 1653–1661 (1908), 93 (entry for Dec. 12, 1654; E. 826. [3.]).

2 John Coffey, "The Toleration Controversy During the English Revolution," in Christopher Durston & Judith Maltby, eds., *Religion in Revolutionary England* (2006), 52.

James T. Dennison Jr., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation: 1523–1693*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008–2014), 428–429.

Report of the Sacramental Cooperation Committee

June 23, 2023

The Committee on Sacramental Cooperation was formed by PMoC Virgil Hurt in October of 2022.

Committee Members: Michael Foster, Rob Hadding (Chair), Jon Herr, Rich Lusk, Toby Sumpter, and Gabe Wetmore

Scope of Work as Directed by PM Hurt –

1. To study the current and likely future situation within the CREC regarding sacramental differences and cooperation, and report the same to 2023 Council.
2. To explore the need to update CREC governing documents to clarify sacramental cooperation between churches, and to propose, if necessary, changes to existing governing documents.
3. PMOC recommends the committee make any changes to our documents as small as possible while still being clear about the intent.

Introduction:

This committee was charged with examining the question of sacramental cooperation between churches with a specific focus on paedocommunion. That is, are all CREC churches obligated to honor the baptisms and communicant status of all other CREC churches when visiting or transferring membership? Our current constitutional language seems ambiguous on this question. It is also clear that, while paedocommunion is the almost universal practice within the CREC, differences of opinion exist on the requirements for all churches to receive visiting worshipers or transferring members to the Lord's Supper and into membership respectively. Thus, our committee considered matters of CREC history, our constitutional language, the current situation of our Communion, our commitment to Reformed catholicity, and we have developed a series of solutions for Council to consider.

Historical Considerations

The CREC (originally the CRE – the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals) began with three churches in the mid- to late-90s. The founding churches were not unified on the issues of paedobaptism and paedocommunion but, as Brett Baker recalls, “It

was more about being together than agreeing on every point – so we committed to making the union work.”¹ This ethos has guided and continues to be the heart of the CREC’s pursuit of Reformed catholicity.

The CREC has been broadly Reformed since its inception, allowing a variety of Reformed Confessions of Faith as the primary expression of respective churches’ statements of faith. From the original CRE Constitution Article II on Local Congregations:²

- F. Each church will adopt into its statement of faith at least one of the following:
1. Westminster Confession of Faith (1647);
 2. American Westminster Confession of Faith (1788);
 3. The Three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession [1561], Heidelberg Catechism [1563], Canons of Dort [1619]);
 4. The London Baptist Confession (1689)
 5. The Savoy Declaration (1658);
 6. The Reformed Evangelical Confession.

The current constitution expands this list to include The Belgic Confession (1561) and the Heidelberg Catechism as discrete confessions, separate from the Three Forms of Unity, and added are the Second Helvetic Confession and the 39 Articles of Christian Religion.

Included in the list of acceptable confessions, then and now, is The London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689). From the beginning there has been room for non-paedobaptist – and, necessarily, non-paedocommunion – churches as full members in the CREC (CRE). This may indicate that, all things being equal, Baptists qua Baptists were welcomed into fellowship from the beginning. However, a note in the *CREC Founding “Fathers” Reflections* explains that there was an understanding from the beginning...

that all baptized members of a CRE church must be received by any other CRE church. This would include London Baptist Confession churches receiving the baptism (sprinkling), without requiring immersion, and receiving into membership baptized children (including infants and young children). As baptized members of the church, they would be entitled to all the benefits of church membership, including communion.

¹ *CREC Founding “Fathers” Reflections* – Douglas Wilson, Brett Baker, Gene Helsel, Randy Booth. Attached to this report as Appendix A.

² Constitution of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals, Ratified November 6, 1997, amended in Presbytery January 30, 1998.

Likewise, if a Baptist family transferred their membership from a London Baptist Confession church to a Paedobaptist CRE church, that church would not require the children to be baptized. Baptist churches were not required to perform infant baptisms, but must accommodate Paedobaptist families in obtaining such baptisms. Paedobaptist churches were not required to perform immersion baptism, but must accommodate Baptist families in obtaining such baptisms.

These provisions applied only to membership transfers between CRE churches. Each local church was free to have its own standards and practices for visitors and new members from outside the CRE.³

As of this writing, the committee knows of no church in the CREC which subscribes to the London Baptist Confession of Faith, and only one member church and one mission church that do not practice paedocommunion (although those churches do commune young children who are able to answer basic questions regarding faith in Christ).

The Constitutional Language

The pertinent language of the CREC Constitution

reads:⁴ Article III. Local Congregations

G. All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another’s members.

H. In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to

3 CREC Founding “Fathers” Reflections – Douglas Wilson, Brett Baker, Gene Helsel, Randy Booth – attached, Appendix A.

4 CREC Constitution, Revision as of April 6, 2022.

adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them.

There is an apparent discrepancy in Article III.G. In the first sentence, receiving other members in good standing is not optional: “All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation *must* be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between churches” (emphasis added). In the second sentence of that same section, however, there is acknowledgment that differences between congregations may occur, particularly in how membership is reckoned. When this happens, it says, churches ought to exercise charity and good faith in receiving these members, making reasonable efforts to include them as full participants in the life of the church. We note that “receiving” and “including” may be interpreted as two different things: their reception as members and their inclusion as participants. Thus the full expectation of how this should play out is unclear.

Article III.H specifically addresses potential difficulties related to membership, paedobaptism, and paedocommunion, urging pastoral sensitivity. This section stops short of requiring churches to practice paedobaptism or paedocommunion, but again calls on churches to do all within their power to accommodate those who do. Despite the preference for paedocommunion exhibited throughout the majority of CREC churches, it is notable that this article is the only place in all of the governing documents that paedocommunion is mentioned. The virtual silence of our documents on the topic highlights the ambiguity of these articles, and places them at the crux of the issue.

Although the language of these two sections may be technically ambiguous, the intention is that churches are expected to work out differences in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill. However, this ethos, as laudable as it is, becomes more difficult to depend upon as the CREC grows. As the CREC becomes an increasingly

attractive option for Reformed churches of different stripes, we will doubtless encounter situations in which the current question becomes a significant factor. In such cases simply relying on a shared understanding of the “spirit” of the documents is inadequate. Greater clarity in the constitutional language is necessary.

Our Current Situation

If there are currently no churches who subscribe to the London Baptist Confession of Faith, and only one church and one mission church that do not practice paedocommunion, why is there such concern over our requirements? Are we trying to solve a problem that does not exist? While the current conversation is dealing largely with hypothetical situations, there is ample reason to believe that the CREC is becoming increasingly attractive to churches with other affiliations who may see the CREC as a possible denominational home. This is owing to several factors:

- Several CREC ministers have found success in the public sphere commenting on current ecclesiastical and cultural matters and are calling on people, particularly men, to rethink a lot of their assumptions. Douglas Wilson; the Fight, Laugh, Feast conferences; Cross Politic; Kuyperian Commentary; and others have earned a hearing with Christians across the spectrum, giving the CREC new and broader exposure.
- The majority response among CREC churches to the Covid lockdowns was to remain open and continue worshiping, sometimes under great pressure to do otherwise. Many CREC churches saw considerable growth during the shutdown period as the profile of the denomination was elevated.
- The CREC’s general posture against and resistance to cultural pressures such as wokeness, and the LGBTQ+ agenda.
- The CREC’s commitment to Reformed catholicity.

Ministers and other church leaders from diverse Reformed backgrounds are investigating the CREC, finding it to be more hospitable than their current denominational situation. This has led to many inquiries by individuals and churches regarding affiliation with the CREC, and a large percentage of those are from contexts in which paedobaptism and/or paedocommunion are not the norm. It is therefore foreseeable that we will have churches pursue membership in the CREC which have different sacramental commitments than most current CREC churches on the basis of our openness to a broad range of Reformed confessions of faith. Because the

governing documents are either ambiguous or are inconsistently interpreted, the potential for disagreement and conflict over how we receive one another's members as visitors or transfers may arise.

As it stands now, the majority expectation is that all CREC churches receive all baptized members of CREC churches at the Lord's Supper and as transferring members. In a recent survey of Elders in the CREC, we posed two questions:⁵

1. Do you believe a communing member of your church – of any age and who is in good standing – should be accepted to the table of any CREC church while visiting?

Yes: 94.21%; No: 5.79%

⁵ Survey Monkey survey conducted by the Sacramental Cooperation Committee and posted on the CREC Presbyters email list from March 6, 2023 – March 18, 2023. Total respondents: 121. Question 1: Yes, 114; No, 7. Question 2: Yes, 110; No, 11.

2. If a communing member of your church – of any age and who is in good standing – is transferred to another CREC church, should the receiving church honor and accept their communing status when receiving them?

Yes: 90.91%; No: 9.09%

This survey reveals something about the expectations of most of our churches: the vast majority responded in the affirmative to these two questions. It is not unanimous, however, and that bears some attention. The email thread connected to the survey on the CREC Presbyters email list included a range of opinions in support of and expressing concerns over requiring baptistic and credocommunion churches to practice against their church's confession and conscience. These perspectives will be discussed below, but it is important to note that paedocommunion as such is not central to most of the comments. That is, where there is disagreement, it is not chiefly over whether paedocommunion is right or not (as noted above, paedocommunion is the nearly unanimous conviction and practice among our churches), but on questions of denominational identity, unity, and trajectory. In the same way, the work of this committee has not been theological: that is, we did not work to defend or object to paedocommunion *per se*.

From the beginning, the CREC has been a novel experiment. What other denomination allows for multiple confessions and polities at the local level, while still

expecting full cooperation at the presbytery and council levels? The CREC was founded not in order to have complete sacramental purity and agreement, but as a place where Reformed Christians of various sorts could come together and be committed to truth in precisely those areas where other Reformed denominations had compromised (e.g., covenant family life, Christian education, six-day creation). Openness to confessional Baptists and non-paedocommunion Presbyterians is evidence of this.

But it is also true that paedocommunion has been an important element of the CREC's identity from its earliest days. Even if a church did not share the conviction, there was agreement that the communicant status of all baptized members was to be acknowledged, and all baptized persons from CREC churches would be granted access to the table by all other CREC churches, disciplinary action notwithstanding. So, while it has not been required that all CREC churches adopt paedocommunion into their primary beliefs and practices, it has at least been an implicit understanding and expectation that all churches would honor the communicant status of all baptized persons from all other CREC churches regardless of age.

We recognize that there is an interplay between governing documents and those documents' interpreters. It is both the case that perfect documents can be misinterpreted and misapplied by fallen men, and that well-intentioned men can go astray through ambiguous documents. Getting our constitution "just right" will not make us unassailable, nor will simply trusting our leaders to make decisions without clear constitutional requirements: the two go hand-in-hand.

The tension of having confessional diversity on one hand, and some kind of sacramental unity or cooperation on the other hand, is the challenge before us.⁶ The current constitutional language reflects an attempt to make the tension bearable by encouraging each to accommodate the other. For instance, the CREC accommodates a Reformed, Baptist church, by receiving them into the denomination, affording them all the benefits of membership; and in turn, the Reformed, Baptist church accommodates the CREC by submitting to Presbyterian polity and receiving members from other CREC churches it would otherwise not ordinarily receive. This appeal to accommodation and charity, however, leaves the actual requirements and expectations with regard to sacramental cooperation ambiguous. Accommodation and charity can mean different things to different people.

Reformed Catholicity

Reformed catholicity is highly valued as constituent to the CREC's identity, a fact made obvious by the array of Reformed confessions of faith to which member churches may subscribe. But it is also evident that there are barriers to true catholicity. We want to be as broad as we can be, but we also want to preserve without compromise those doctrinal positions and practices that are equally fundamental to our identity. How do we hold broad commitments in concord with narrower ones? In the current conversation, the tension is resolved by either *requiring* or *not requiring* all CREC churches to recognize and honor the communicant status of any member in good standing of another CREC church, discipline notwithstanding.

Arguments in favor of the *requirement* to do so are based on:

1. **The understanding and practice of the CREC from the beginning.** To deviate from that would go against our denominational tradition.
2. **The understanding of the connection between the Sacraments and Church Discipline.** To deny a person access to the Lord's Supper who has already been granted communicant status is, in effect, an act of discipline.

⁶ It should be noted that the tension that exists in our governing documents has been acknowledged from the early days of the denomination. Several men—including Douglas Wilson, Randy Booth, and Steve Wilkins—have observed that at some point we would require an enduring solution.

3. **The desire to see our real, spiritual unity as churches truly worked out in practice.** Unity of sacramental practice among CREC churches is a (but not the only) basis of our unity as a Communion, but cultural issues of our day, important as they may be, are not. Paul says that our unity is not only demonstrated at the Lord's Table, but also that our coming to the same table and partaking of the same bread and wine is formative of our unity (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Similarly for baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13). We cannot claim to have complete unity as a communion if we refuse to accept the baptismal and communicant status conferred by other CREC churches. To say a person is not validly baptized, or that they are not welcome to the Table, is to say they are not united with us.
4. **The commitment to broad catholicity.** This position best expresses

and preserves catholicity by including not only those we fully agree with, but also those who differ from us at various points. It is the exclusion of each others' members on the basis of doctrinal differences that inhibits catholicity.

Arguments *against the requirement* to do so are based on:

1. **The breadth of allowable confessions.** The CREC has always allowed a range of Reformed confessions and does not require any exception to their respective confessions on the point of the sacraments.
2. **The understanding of local sessions as the final authority.** To insist that a church go against its own constitution, confession, or conscience is to impose an unreasonable burden, and undermines the authority and responsibility of the local session to fence the Table.
3. **The desire to protect local congregations from disunity.** To require a church to accommodate sacramental practices contrary to its own confession sews visible division and potentially discord within the local congregation.
4. **The desire to be a “big tent.”** If we draw the line to membership in the CREC at this point, we risk making ourselves unattractive as a denominational home to many churches who are aligned with us on the vast majority of our other distinctives, not least our positions on cultural issues. This could result in curtailing our growth and effectiveness in the culture war.

While both of these positions have merit, at bottom they represent paradigmatic differences that run deep enough to make clarification necessary.

Solutions

Potential solutions to the problem are as complex as the question itself. Our committee members represent the full spectrum of the CREC on these issues by design, and as such, we discussed each angle and viewpoint in our meetings. We agree that clarification is needed, but do not all agree on the best way forward, nor the extent to which clarity is needed. This responsibility will fall to the Council to prayerfully set the direction for all of us. The variation already visible within a committee of six presbyters is further evidence that a growing denomination may only continue to see more of the same.

We find ourselves with six possible solutions. While there are diverse opinions as to which option might be the best solution, we all agree that these represent the options before Council. Our suggestions for each of these possible solutions are as

follows:⁷

1. *Maintain the status quo*

Our committee is in agreement that we should clarify and address the ambiguities in our constitution, and we do not recommend this solution. Leaving things as they are would be unwise for the future of the CREC for all of the reasons detailed in the report above.

2. *Make moderate modifications to Articles III.G and III.H to clarify our current position*

Articles III.G and III.H shall read as follows:

G. All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

H. In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them, **at the very least, receiving the membership and communicant status of individuals as previously**

⁷ Please refer to Appendix B of this document for a more detailed comparison of the differences of language between the current wording and that of these solutions.

conferred by their fellow CREC elders. Any churches that have been previously received into CREC membership who explicitly took exception to this requirement, the CREC hereby grandfathers in.

Rationale:

This solution seeks to recognize the practice of the CREC as received, clarifying the original intention of the language of Articles III.G and III.H, while carving

out space for exceptions which have already been allowed. It also seeks to retain as much of the original language as possible, not charting a new course, but clarifying what many see as the original course. The bold letters in the new wording of Article III.H above are simply to highlight one significant point of this clarification.

3. *State that sacramental cooperation is desirable, but not required*

Amend Article III.H as follows:

H. In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them. **Although we encourage and hope for sacramental cooperation throughout all CREC churches, individual local church sessions would maintain the freedom to administer the sacraments according to their conscience, constitution, and confessional understanding.**

Rationale:

This approach is consistent with the CREC's broad catholicity as demonstrated by allowing various Protestant confessions, some of which take an explicitly credobaptist and/or credocommunion position, as a local congregation's doctrinal standards (Article III.C). It also reflects our belief that the local congregation has primacy in the structure of biblical church government (Article III.A). Church Discipline is central to church governance, and the administration of the sacraments is central to Church Discipline. If we allow credo-confessions and stress the primacy of local church government, it then follows that a local session should be allowed to administer those sacraments according to their stated doctrinal standards.

Further, if the CREC takes a position that closes off the possibility of committed credobaptist and credocommunion churches who desire to remain true to their confession, conscience, and constitutions, we may well be limiting our growth potential as a denomination and, therefore, limiting our reach and impact in the culture.

4. *Re-word Constitution Articles III.G & III.H to clarify our robust*

expectation of sacramental cooperation

Articles III.G and III.H shall read as follows:

G. The CREC is a unified communion of churches with various confessional differences. While we allow a variety of views and practices related to the sacraments (e.g. paedobaptism and credobaptism, paedocommunion and credocommunion), we seek mutual submission to one another (Eph. 5:21). Therefore, all CREC churches agree to recognize the sacramental actions of other CREC churches by accepting the baptismal and communicant status of their members, regardless of any confessional differences between the churches.

1. All members in good standing of a CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church, with their baptismal and communicant status intact, even if the receiving church would not have conferred that status themselves. This applies to both visiting and transferring families from other CREC churches. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.
2. Any credobaptist church in this Communion must accept the validity of the baptisms of other CREC churches, even if they would not have performed that baptism themselves. They may think that a person (e.g. an infant) ought not to have been baptized, or ought to have been baptized by a different mode (e.g. immersion), but they agree to accept that the person is, in fact, baptized, though they might consider it irregular.
3. Any paedobaptist and credocommunion church (defined as having both communicant and non-communicant members, where non-communicants become communicants after the session accepts their profession of faith as credible), shall agree to accept the communicant status conferred by other CREC churches upon their members. Thus, if a family from a paedocommunion CREC church (defined as regarding all baptized members as communicants) visits a credocommunion CREC church, they shall be welcomed to the table as communicants, even if the receiving church would not have conferred communicant status on the member in the same way. Likewise,

credocommunion churches shall agree to accept transfers of members in good standing from other CREC churches, and will honor and accept the communicant status they held in their sister church, regardless of age or mental capacity, by transferring them as communicant members.

H. While members in good standing of a CREC church must be received by transfer to another CREC church, with their baptismal and communicant status intact, regardless of confessional differences, once they have transferred, the receiving church is not under obligation to admit any children subsequently born to them in the manner of their former church. After their transfer, any new admissions to baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be done at the discretion of the receiving CREC session, according to their normal practice. Credobaptist CREC churches are strongly encouraged to allow paedobaptist member families to have their children baptized at a paedobaptist CREC church and to subsequently recognize that baptism, although this constitution does not require that they do so.

Rationale:

Given the committee report on the ambiguity in these articles as they stand, this solution seeks to clarify the CREC's expectations of churches regarding their members. One of the ambiguous portions of the current articles relates to the language of "practice." Churches are told that they must "receive" any member of another CREC church (III.G), but they "do not have to adopt or practice such variations" as paedobaptism or paedocommunion (III.H). Rather, they must "do all within their power to accommodate them."

This solution preferences and clarifies the generally-accepted expectation of receiving one another's members, but also seeks to clarify the meaning of the word "practice." In the wording of the current constitution, the expectation might be that a credocommunion church would need to receive the baptisms and communicant statuses of any visiting or transferring CREC members, but would this mean that they are "practicing" paedocommunion?

This solution assumes that there are two ways communicant status is conferred by a church to its members: either by baptism (the paedocommunion view) or by credible profession of faith (the credocommunion view). Thus the Lord's Supper, on either view, is not the moment at which one *becomes* a communicant member. Rather, it is a

sacramental moment at which one is *recognized* as already being a communicant member. The practice of credocommunion is fundamentally about how one becomes a communicant. As such, allowing a very young communicant member from another CREC church to partake of the Lord's Supper would not be "practicing" paedocommunion, properly speaking. A credocommunion church would only "practice" paedocommunion if they began conferring new communicant status on members at baptism.

According to this rationale, this solution would not be asking credocommunion churches to "practice" paedocommunion. That is, they would not be asked to confer communicant status in any way other than they already do. Rather, they would simply be asked to act in deference to their brothers in the CREC who have *already conferred* that status, by *recognizing* that status. Nothing about their normal practice of conferring new communicant status by valid profession of faith would need to change.

Paedobaptist and paedocommunion churches in the CREC regularly make exceptions in deference to credobaptist members (and perhaps less often for credocommunion members). For example, they allow parents to put off the baptism of their children until later, contrary to their paedobaptist confessions. This solution asks credobaptist and credocommunion churches to make similar exceptions in deference to sister CREC churches in the matters of baptism and communicant status.

One objection made on the elder's list, and discussed in our committee, was that a proposal such as this would undermine the authority of a local session and force them to do something against their will. While seeking to preserve this local church authority according to Article III.A, this solution does not force anything upon a local session, any more than the CREC constitution in general forces anything upon a local session.

Churches join the CREC, and submit to its governing documents, of their own volition and without compulsion. When they do so, they not only agree to abide by the CREC constitution, they agree to adopt the CREC constitution through article VII into their own constitution (see Article III.K). The governing documents of the CREC require many different things of our churches, but churches voluntarily agree to abide by those requirements. And they agree to abide by those requirements at all times, not only at those times when the local session's own ideals directly align with them.

Finally, it is important that whatever this Communion requires of member churches be spelled out clearly. Member churches, and churches seeking future membership in this Communion, should know exactly what is expected of them. Our requirements for receiving members from other CREC churches should be clear and unambiguous, not left

open to a multitude of interpretations. This solution seeks to spell these things out clearly in our governing documents.

5. *Form new presbyteries and/or a sister denomination which allow for difference in sacramental practice*

The CREC shall explore the addition of two additional presbyteries: the “Machen” Presbytery (to facilitate credocommunion churches) and the “Spurgeon” Presbytery (to facilitate Baptist churches). Alternatively, the CREC shall aid in the establishment of new “sister” Communion which preference these sacramental views.

Rationale

One of the best features of the CREC is its commitment to Reformed catholicity. This is seen in our flexibility on many issues, including polity and the breadth of Reformed confessions we include. We are attempting a unique experiment in ecclesiology: a denomination that seeks to maximize accommodation in areas where faithful and godly Christians differ, while zealously guarding orthodoxy and orthopraxy. While we are committed to Reformed catholicity, there are certain distinctives within the CREC that most very much want to preserve, including paedocommunion. Paedocommunion is understood by many as an exception to every Reformed confession, and yet has become a crucial piece of the CREC’s identity. Many are in the CREC today precisely because they no longer fit other Reformed denominations due to their paedocommunion convictions. Is there a way to preserve paedocommunion, while still growing the CREC alongside other like-minded Christians who are credocommunionists or baptistic? While acknowledging that no one denomination can be fully catholic in today’s world given the widespread fractures within the church, we should still seek to maximize our catholic reach as much as reasonably and practically possible.

It is certainly true that sacramental unity is vital to our Communion. This is

why the CREC has generally pushed for all churches in our denomination to recognize the sacramental status of members in other CREC churches, even when there are different convictions about who should receive the sacraments. Biblically, the sacraments play a key role in the unity of the church as tangible markers of the covenant community. But the sacraments are not the only ground of our unity. In Ephesians 4, Paul speaks of *one faith* (that is, shared confessional content), *one Lord* (Christ's authority under which the faith is lived out), and *one baptism* (the sacramental doorway and boundary of the covenant). We know that there are faithful churches and congregations with whom we

disagree on the sacraments, and on the other hand many that practice paedobaptism or paedocommunion but have become synagogues of Satan. Because of these two competing realities, agreement on the sacraments is not a sufficient basis for identifying fellow believers. Unfortunately, in today's messy ecclesiastical situation, catholicity is more complex than that.

What kind of unity might be possible with those who agree with us on most everything except for the sacraments? The perceived requirement that any incoming church practice paedocommunion with visitors and transfers has sometimes kept churches that do not believe in paedocommunion away from the CREC. While this preserves paedocommunion in the CREC (a good and necessary goal), it comes at the cost of potential growth and even broader catholicity. If the only kinds of credocommunion and Baptist churches we allow into the CREC are ones that are willing to recognize paedobaptism or paedocommunion as valid alternatives, we will never really have any substantial number of non-paedocommunion churches. Our claim to "include" credocommunionists and Baptists will not be fully credible.

We are faced with competing visions for the CREC's future. On the one hand, we could be *the* paedocommunion denomination in Reformed Christendom. This is simple, clear, and gives us a sharply defined identity. But while catholicity should generally include recognizing the sacramental actions of other churches and accommodating them as much as possible (per our current constitutional language), true catholicity *also* means recognizing that there are faithful, God-fearing Christians who have different convictions in these areas and we must respect their practices even as we disagree with them. That is the tension: it is really a tension between these two aspects of catholicity. We have to make a choice between sacramental consistency and sacramental catholicity.

A strong case could be made for going in either direction. But is it possible to have the best of both worlds?

One possible way forward that both preserves paedocommunion's privileged place in the CREC *and* opens the door to a genuine catholicity with non-paedocommunion churches that are otherwise like-minded is the formation of confessional presbyteries for credocommunionists and Baptists, in which these types of churches would be free to practice their convictions in sacramental matters.

This pathway has several advantages. By creating a clear distinction between paedocommunion presbyteries and the new presbyteries, paedocommunion is protected,

while these new confessional presbyteries would have the liberty to practice the sacraments according to their conscience. At the same time, this solution would allow the CREC to practice an even broader form of "Reformed catholicity" than we do today.

These presbyteries would allow the CREC to grow alongside churches that are otherwise a good fit but do not practice paedocommunion.

Another similar alternative would be to assist in the formation of sister denominations that share core convictions with the CREC but differ in sacramental convictions and practices. This would allow for close fraternal relations among the denominations, while maintaining the distinctives of each.

Either of these options seems to be fully consistent with the founding vision of the CREC, and advances a Reformed view of Christian doctrine and life.

6. *Remove the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith from the Book of Confessions, and further, explicitly become a paedocommunion denomination*

Removing the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith from the list of allowable confessions of CREC churches would remove the ambiguity surrounding our identity as a communion on the issue of the inclusion of covenant children in baptism, and would be a relatively straightforward move, unlikely to affect many current CREC churches.

It is significant that the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, obviously modeled on and in many areas identical to the Westminster Confession of Faith, demonstrates both unity and disunity with Westminster. Where these documents vary, most notably in the areas of church polity and the sacraments (“ordinances” in the LBCF), there is no doubt that the Baptists were making clear that while there was a great deal of overlap of doctrine, the remaining differences were not inconsequential, and were significant barriers to full fellowship.

Explicitly becoming a paedocommunion denomination, however, would require more amendment of our existing documents. Our committee does not recommend this solution, and therefore suggests no particular wording. There would be more complications to discuss should the Council decide to pursue this direction, and these complications are outside the purview of our committee’s task. If a 1689 Baptist church is willing to join with us, submitting to our documents as amended, our committee believes that we should eagerly receive them.

Conclusion

Our aim as we did this work was, at least to some degree, to have the conversation on behalf of the Communion. We worked to represent all of the views well, and to consider the implications of each. Committee members argued earnestly for their positions, and it was no mere academic exercise.

Despite the obvious disagreements within our committee, however, one thing at least was certain: the good natured and brotherly attitude so distinct within the CREC is alive and well. Our discussions and debates were robust, but also congenial. And our prayer is that the work put forth here would serve the CREC well, by aiding us in protecting the good work that has already been done so that these brotherly discussions may continue for the good of the Communion and the Kingdom.

In sum, paedocommunion has been long taken for granted as one of the dominant practices of the CREC, but our catholicity has also left us vulnerable to ambiguities and inconsistencies within our governing documents, or between our documents and our practice. In response to PM Hurt’s direction, we have explored and summarized our past, present, and future situation with regards to sacramental cooperation. And though we could not settle on one single path forward, we have outlined six possible solutions. It is worth pointing out that solution #5 may be explored along with any of

the other proposed solutions.

The question before the Council now is, “What kind of denomination do we want to be?” The sacramental cooperation question is not a mere matter of practicality, but our response to it will chart a significant course for our future which will extend into the next generation of our denominational life, and perhaps beyond. We encourage Council to treat this with care, seeking the best for our Communion, whether or not it is the easiest solution.

Appendix A - CREC Founding “Fathers” Reflections

Douglas Wilson, Brett Baker, Gene Helsel, Randy Booth

These are some recollections of what was going on back in the “olden days,” when the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals (CRE), was getting started (1996-1997).

Three churches adopted the first constitution:

- Community Evangelical Fellowship (CEF), Moscow, ID (Douglas Wilson)
- Eastside Evangelical Fellowship, (EEF) Bellevue, WA (Brett Baker)
- Wenatchee Evangelical Fellowship, (WEF) Wenatchee, WA (Gene Helsel)

The first presbytery meeting was held in 1998, and a fourth church was added to the confederation:

- Grace Covenant Church, (GCC) Texarkana, AR (Randy Booth)

Prior to this time (1993-1995), pastors Wilson and Booth were moving from Baptist to Paedobaptist positions, each writing books (*To a Thousand Generations* and *Children of the Promise*). CEF, Moscow ended up with a “cooperative agreement” between Baptist and Paedobaptists, which enabled them to avoid a church split. This “cooperative agreement” remains in place today. Texarkana Reformed Baptist Church did split over the issue and GCC, Texarkana was formed. At this point there was a recognition that God was doing something in several churches and that there was a need for those churches to have a safe place to land and to work through the necessary transitions. This also included the paedo-communion issue. Places like the PCA and OPC did not offer a place for churches like ours.

Eastside Evangelical Fellowship began in 1993 as a baptistic church, when CEF invited them to be a sister church, and the next year, WEF joined in the same way. Years later, in 2000, EEF commenced a study in earnest of baptism among the elders, which lasted four years. All but one of the elders had become persuaded of the Paedo position. This elder began the study as Credo and became more convinced of his position at the end of the study, so EEF adopted a cooperation agreement and

continues with that even today.

Brett recalls that, “given the various places our three churches were in our understanding of the covenant before forming the CRE, we had to begin with cooperation. And I think we were close enough as friends that we would have started the CRE regardless. It was more about being together than agreeing on every point—so we committed to making the union work.”

Gene Helsel offers this account of CEF coming into the CRE:

November 1995 – February of 1996

The session (Gene) petitioned the elders at CEF to oversee the work in Wenatchee in a “mother/daughter” relationship. After some deliberation, CEF graciously agreed to do so. **May 2, 1996**

WEF (with a few exceptions) adopted the Westminster Statement of Faith 1647 as its own.

June 20, 1996

The first version of WEF’s constitution was adopted by the eldership of the church.

March of 1997

WEF conducted intense but charitable debates at its weekly Men’s Forums regarding the doctrine of baptism. Every man was welcome to attend the meetings, but the only ones who were allowed to debate were those who had:

- 1) Read a book and a pamphlet on paedobaptism
- 2) Read a book and a pamphlet on credobaptism
- 3) Written a paper defending the position that they did not

personally hold to. The meetings were well attended, lively and profitable.

November 6, 1997

WEF, in concord with EEF and CEF, ratified the constitution of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals and adopted it into its own constitution.

From the first CRE Constitution Article II. Local Congregations:

F. Each church will adopt into its statement of faith at least one of the following:

1. Westminster Confession of Faith (1647);
2. American Westminster Confession of Faith (1788);
3. The Three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession [1561], Heidelberg Catechism [1563], Canons of Dort [1619]);
4. The London Baptist Confession (1689);
5. The Savoy Declaration (1658);
6. The Reformed Evangelical Confession (see Article XII).

G. Controversies within a local congregation regarding matters arising from

differences between our various confessions will not be adjudicated beyond the local church level. All churches agree to work cheerfully and carefully in their study of doctrinal differences, and to strive for like-mindedness with one another (Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16).

H. Inclusion in the CRE presupposes honest subscription by the eldership to whatever confessions are adopted, with any exceptions carefully noted prior to affiliation (Ex. 20: 16; Col. 3:9). If a difference of conviction arises after a church has become affiliated, then the presbytery must be notified before the adoption of confessional or creedal exceptions by the local congregation which depart from, or may be at odds with, CRE standards.

I. All members in good standing in a local CRE congregation must be received by any other CRE church regardless of confessional differences between the churches.

All CRE churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g., individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

In the transfer of members from one CRE church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them.

It was the understanding, from the beginning, that all baptized members of a CRE church must be received by any other CRE church. This would include a London Baptist Confession church receiving the baptism (sprinkling), without requiring immersion, and receiving into membership baptized children (including infants and young children). As baptized members of the church, they would be entitled to the all the benefits of church membership, including communion.

Likewise, if a Baptist family transferred their membership from a London Baptist Confession church to a Paedobaptist CRE church, that church could not require the children to be baptized. Baptist churches were not required to perform infant baptisms, but must accommodate Paedobaptist families in obtaining such baptisms. Paedobaptist churches were not required to perform immersion baptism, but must accommodate Baptist families in obtaining such baptisms.

These provisions applied only to membership transfers between CRE churches. Each local church was free to have its own standards and practices for visitors and new members from outside the CRE.

Appendix B - Constitutional Language Comparisons

For the ease of the Council delegates in considering the various solutions offered above, this appendix provides language comparisons between the existing Constitution Articles III.G and III.H and some of the suggested revisions. Words struck-through are discarded current language, normal words are existing language, words in **bold** are new additions.

Current language:

Article III

G. All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

H. In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them.

Solution #2 revises these articles as follows:

Article III

G. All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

H. In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their

power to accommodate them, **at the very least, receiving the membership and communicant status of individuals as previously conferred by their fellow CREC elders. Any churches that have been previously received into CREC membership who explicitly took exception to this requirement, the CREC hereby grandfather in.**

Solution #3 revises these articles as follows:

Article III

G. All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.

H. In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them. **Although we encourage and hope for sacramental cooperation throughout all CREC churches, individual local church sessions would maintain the freedom to administer the sacraments according to their stated confessional standards.**

Solution #4 revises these articles as follows:

Article III

G. The CREC is a unified communion of churches with various confessional differences. While we allow a variety of views and practices related to the sacraments (e.g. paedobaptism and credobaptism, paedocommunion and credocommunion), we seek mutual submission to one another (Eph. 5:21). Therefore, all CREC churches agree to recognize the sacramental actions of other CREC churches by accepting the baptismal and communicant status of

their members, regardless of any confessional differences between the churches.

1. All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church **with their baptismal and communicant status intact, even if the receiving church would not have conferred that status themselves. This applies to both visiting and transferring families from other CREC churches.** ~~regardless of confessional differences between the churches.~~ All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (e.g. individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another's members.
2. **Any credobaptist church in this Communion must accept the validity of the baptisms of other CREC churches, even if they would not have performed that baptism themselves. They may think that a person (e.g. an infant) ought not to have been baptized, or ought to have been baptized by a different mode (e.g. immersion), but they agree to accept that the person is, in fact, baptized, though they might consider it irregular.**
3. **Any credocommunion church (defined as having both communicant and non-communicant members, where non-communicants become communicants after the session accepts their profession of faith as credible), shall agree to accept the communicant status conferred by other CREC churches upon their members. Thus, if a family from a paedocommunion CREC church (defined as regarding all baptized members as communicants) visits a credocommunion CREC church, they shall be welcomed to the table as communicants, even if the receiving church would not have conferred communicant status on the member in the same way. Likewise, credocommunion churches shall agree to accept transfers of members in good standing from other CREC churches, and will honor and accept the communicant status they held in their sister church, regardless of age or mental capacity, by transferring them as communicant members.**

H. ~~In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them.~~ **While members in good standing of a CREC church must be received by transfer to another CREC church, with their baptismal and communicant status intact, regardless of confessional differences, once they have transferred, the receiving church is not under obligation to admit any children subsequently born to them in the manner of their former church. After their transfer, any new admissions to baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be done at the discretion of the receiving CREC session, according to their normal practice. Credobaptist CREC churches are strongly encouraged to allow paedobaptist member families to have their children baptized at a paedobaptist CREC church and to subsequently recognize that baptism, although this constitution does not require that they do so.**

Final reference notes on the language in these solutions:

- Solution #2 retains all of the current language, but expands the end of III.H to clarify our expectations.
- Solution #3 retains all of the current language, but adds one clarifying statement to the end of III.H.
- Solution #4 is the largest re-write, but it 1) retains most of the *current* III.G, adding larger clarifying statements explaining how things would work practically in the churches; and 2) strikes and re-writes all of *current* III.H. Despite there being a lot of new language, the flow of thought in the *current* articles is maintained (though expanded), and III.H is re-written to preserve the historic “sense” of the article, if not the exact words.

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- [1] *CREC Founding “Fathers” Reflections* – Douglas Wilson, Brett Baker, Gene Helsel, Randy Booth. Attached as an appendix to this report.
- [2] Constitution of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals, Ratified November 6, 1997, amended in Presbytery January 30, 1998.
- [3] *CREC Founding “Fathers” Reflections* – Douglas Wilson, Brett Baker, Gene Helsel, Randy Booth – attached.
- [4] CREC Constitution, Revision as of April 6, 2022.
- [5] Survey Monkey survey conducted by the Sacramental Cooperation Committee from March 6, 2023 – March 18, 2023. Total respondents: 121 – Question 1: Yes, 114; No, 7. Question 2: Yes, 110; No, 11.
- [6] It should be noted that the tension that exists in our governing documents has been acknowledged from the early days of the denomination, and that at some point it would require an enduring solution.

Motion to amend the Book of Procedures and the Constitution

Rational: While our governing documents prohibit the imposition of binding arbitration, they do not prohibit the voluntary request for binding arbitration. The addition of this language is to clarify an option that is already available.

Book of Procedures Article II. Definitions

C. Nonbinding Arbitration

An informal mini-trial conducted by a third party or panel in an attempt to assist disputing parties to more objectively assess the respective merit of their positions and the likely outcome of a formal trial. The outcome of non-binding arbitration is advisory only. A local church may voluntarily request binding arbitration via their local constitution or written request of the session.

Constitution Article IV The Broader Assemblies

2. The authority of the broader assemblies of the CREC is set forth in various parts of this Constitution. The assemblies shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner and hence their authority includes the following powers:

- k. to require mediation and non-binding arbitration, when appropriate, in order to reconcile brothers; (a local church may voluntarily request binding arbitration via their local constitution or written request of the session)

Report of the Church Planting Commission July 2023

Commission Members:

Brian Brown, Trinity Church Denver, Colorado
 Garrett Crow, King's Cross Reformed Church, Austin, Texas
 Rob Hadding (Chair), Covenant Presbyterian Church, Sulphur,
 Louisiana Steve Jeffery, All Saints Presbyterian Church, Fort
 Worth, Texas
 Douglas Wilson, Christ Church, Moscow, Idaho

The Church Planting Commission was established by Presiding Minister of Council Virgil Hurt in May of 2021 for the purpose of studying, planning, and implementing a domestic church planting strategy for the CREC.

1. The primary work product of the Church Planting Commission was the Church Plant Locational Recommendations project, conducted by Points Consulting in October of 2022. This survey contains a wealth of useful information about the rate of consumption of CREC-related online content, broken down by county, city, and other geographical areas. With creative deployment, it could be utilized to identify specific areas in the US where there is a demand for a CREC church plant and enough competent and motivated people on the ground to make it happen.

To that end, The Grass-Roots Church Planting Project aims at making good use of the data while placing the onus on church planters, sponsoring churches, and interested people. The following outlines how this would work.

Step 1: Publish the information

The broad-brush results of the demographic survey should be published on a website, allowing people to see how many people in their local area (city, county, etc) share their enthusiasm about CREC-related online content. Obviously no personal details would be published, so no doxing would occur. Setting up such a website would be a very easy task, since plenty of free online tools exist for publishing and searching tables of data.

Step 2: Advertise the website and invite responses

The website should be advertised on all available online platforms (particularly those included in the demographic survey itself), and members of the public who would be enthusiastic about a new CREC church plant in their area should be invited to visit the website and see how many other people share their enthusiasm. In some cases, people may be disappointed with the result. But in other cases, they may discover that there are many people in their local area who share their enthusiasm for all things CREC.

In these cases, members of the public would be able to fill in a form

on the website itself, expressing their interest in a CREC church plant, giving their personal details, and inviting us to contact them.

Step 3: Ongoing assessment of responses and identification of hot-spot locations

We should collate and assess the responses in an ongoing way, with the aim of identifying geographical areas where there is a particularly high concentration of enthusiastic people in an area that currently lacks a CREC church.

Step 4: Organize an initial exploratory meeting in hot-spot locations

Once hot spots have been identified, we should contact the respondents who live in that area, and set up an initial exploratory meeting, inviting all interested people to attend. These meetings should be advertised in all the usual online sources. The meeting would be hosted by two or three CREC Pastors / Elders, with the aims of:

- (1) Getting to know the interested people in the hot-spot locations;
- (2) Giving those people a chance to get to know each other;
- (3) Identifying individuals who may be sufficiently motivated and competent to lead a local church-planting effort;
- (4) Presenting a vision for the CREC and our ongoing church planting efforts; and
- (5) Providing guidance to those present about what they should do next if they wish to see a local CREC church plant (see step 5, below).

Step 5: Guidance in the initial stages of church planting

If sufficient support for a CREC church plant is evident either during or immediately after the initial exploratory meeting, the following guidance should be given:

- (1) Start meeting once a month to pray, get to know one another, sing Psalms, eat, and generally start getting the ball rolling;
- (2) Invite others to join you if you think they may also be interested;
- (3) Don't break anything at your existing local churches;
- (4) Keep going like this for about 4 to 6 months, while we keep in touch with them, offering advice, support, and encouragement.

The 4- to 6-month timeline should give us enough opportunity to get to know the leaders of these hot-spot groups, and to assess their enthusiasm and competence.

Step 6: Further meetings and progress towards church plant formation

Where hot spot groups emerge who successfully get to the end of

step 5, we go back to arrange another event, perhaps a Friday-Saturday conference, to promote further the vision of CREC church planting.

All being well, thriving groups could get to the stage where they could be adopted as a mission church by another CREC church, integrated into a Guided Church Plant structure, call their own Pastor, or whatever else would move them towards full particularization in the CREC.

2. The Commission also makes the following motion to Council:

Inquiries from existing or fledgling churches regarding membership in the CREC are increasing. Some of these are viable and others are not, but one thing that has become evident is that we are not able to facilitate very many church plants under our current system of “Mission Churches.” The Book of Procedures addresses the process of “Mission Churches,” which requires a current member-church to assume oversight responsibility and to provide a *pro tempore* session for at least two years. This is a large commitment for a church. Smaller churches often cannot spare the resources and larger churches are limited in other ways (e.g., their own growth, distance, etc.).

The other provision in our Book of Procedures addresses the process of receiving established churches into our membership by way of a “sponsoring church,” whereby they become a “candidate church,” which is a much lower level of commitment.

Our Book of Procedures provides these guidelines—these two ways to come into the CREC—but it does not prohibit other ways. For example, a group could form an independent church and after two years (if they meet the requirement of two or more elders), they could apply by way of the “candidate church” process. The Church Planting Commission recommends that we add this to our Book of Procedures to offer a third process and to provide some regular guidance for those who want to go that route.

Article: CREC Guided Church Plant

1. Purpose

When a group wishes to attempt to plant a church in a new location and cannot find a sponsoring church under our “mission church” guidelines, that group may seek to establish a voluntary “pastoral counsel,” (at least three men), of current CREC pastors/elders (not necessarily from the same church or the same presbytery), who agree to offer counsel and guidance to the group.

2. Definitions

a) A CREC Guided Church Plant: is an informal group of families and individuals who are exploring the possibility of establishing a church and who might culminate in constituting an independent

church with the intent of becoming a particularized church in the CREC.

b) Particularized church: a constituted body of Christians who have met all the criteria established by this policy to become a separate church governed by its own session and received into the CREC as full members.

3. Procedure

a) CREC Guided Church Plant: A church shall be considered a CREC Guided Church Plant when the following conditions have been met:

- i. A “pastoral counsel” of three or more CREC pastors/elders has formally agreed to sit on the pastoral counsel and provide advice and guidance to the group.
- ii. A constitution has been written to define and govern the church plant work.
- iii. The local presbytery has approved the church plant.

b) Conditions for Particularization

- i. The church plant shall have its own constitution and bylaws.
- ii. The church plant shall have been formally constituted for not less than two years.
- iii. The church plant shall have at least two pastors/elders.
- iv. The church plant must then start the “candidate church” process as contained in the CREC Book of Procedures.

c) Relationship to the CREC

- i. CREC Guided Church Plants have an associate status with the CREC, as long as the above conditions are met, the pastoral counsel is maintained, and the local presbytery has approved.
- ii. Delegates from these church plants may attend presbytery meetings as visitors.

d) Termination of Relationship

- i. Termination of the associate relationship between the CREC and the church plant can happen in four ways:
 - (1) The church plant becomes particularized, defined by being received into CREC membership.
 - (2) A decision by the established “pastoral counsel” to terminate the relationship.
 - (3) A decision by the church plant to terminate the relationship with the CREC.
 - (4) A vote of the presbytery to terminate the relationship.

3. At the same time the Church Planting Commission has been considering how to best approach the task of church planting in the CREC, an independent organization, DomNet, has been formed for the purpose of

vetting, funding, and aiding church planting efforts. It is the recommendation of this commission that DomNet continue the oversight, expansion, and implementation of the Church Plant Locational Recommendations Project and the Grass Roots Church Planting Project, along with its other mission objectives in service to CREC church planting efforts.

Respectfully submitted,
The Church Planting Commission

Constitution III.O

1. A CREC Session may ask a nearby CREC church Session to have one of its members serve on its Session as a *Pro Tempore* (for a time) elder. His renewable term, and purpose shall be specified by the Session. The purpose may be enriching its counsel, or also to temporarily supply a plurality of elders. Presiding Ministers should be advised and offer counsel before proceeding.
2. Member churches whose Session number is reduced to one local pastor/elder, shall be reduced in status to mission church at the second consecutive presbytery meeting in that situation, or earlier, at the presbytery's discretion, regardless of pro tempore elder activity on said Session. The presbytery shall appoint an established Session to take oversight of the work until it is ready to return to full member status.
3. Pastors/elders from two different Sessions shall not serve on each other's Sessions, where either Session has only one local pastor/elder, without consent from the presbytery. A Session with only one local elder shall not allow him to serve as Pro Tem on another Session, without consent from the presbytery.

Rationale:

1. Pro Temp elders are not directly stipulated or provided for anywhere in our documents, to this point. This seems the best place to add them.
2. Elders pro temp should not be used long term or indefinitely to make up for a lack of local elders. This degrades the strength and authority of the Session.
3. Having elders serve on each other's Sessions when they are very small in size creates a conflict of interest, and degrades accountability within each Session.

OPC BCO, XIII. 10.

10. If a session shall cease to exist or become so small as to prevent it from working effectively, the presbytery shall provide for an election and ordination of elders from within the congregation; or the presbytery, with the consent of the congregation, may appoint ruling elders or ministers, or both, normally from within the same presbytery, to be an acting session or to augment the existing session temporarily.

PCA BCO, 12-1, summary:

“If there is only one ruling elder, he does not constitute a Session.”

“If there are fewer than four ruling elders, the pastor and one ruling elder shall constitute a quorum.”