

## Introduction

Community Christian Reformed Church (CCRC) of Kitchener asked Synod 2021 to delay decisions regarding the recommendations of the report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality until Synod 2022.

CCRC took this time to engage in active discussions that involved over 100 members and officebearers studying the Human Sexuality Report (HSR). The members of CCRC that participated in the HSR discussion groups agree that this cannot be the end of the conversation. CCRC is committed to continuing the discussion around human sexuality and how it impacts our congregation. Council received a variety of opinions from the participants and spent a full day together reviewing the responses and recommendations of these study groups. The Council of CCRC is not in full agreement with the Human Sexuality Report and certainly does not want it to be the conclusion of the discussion around human sexuality within the CRC denomination. Although we have a variety of concerns with the HSR, we have focused our attention on Recommendation D: “That synod declare that the church’s teaching on premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status”. This is for us the most concerning portion of the report. Therefore, we make the following overture to Classis Huron.

## Overture

Community CRC of Kitchener Ontario overtures Classis Huron to overture Synod not to adopt Recommendation D of the Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

### *Grounds:*

1. Adopting Recommendation D would create deep confusion among the churches.
  - a. The report seems to equate the Latin term “status confessionis” with the English term “confessional status.” But the terms have different meanings. Historically “status confessionis” has meant “crisis moment where the faith must be confessed anew”<sup>\*</sup> rather than “status of confession.” This error in use of terms creates confusion.
  - b. The statement “We conclude, then, that the church’s teaching against sexual immorality, including homosexual sex, already has confessional status” (HSR XVI.A.) is confusing and unclear. It seems to be stating that the opinions and interpretations of the HSR is already the prevailing understanding of the confessions and the Bible in the CRC. Given the controversy and the ongoing discussion surrounding the HSR, the interpretations documented within it are not the sole understandings among the broader Christian Reformed Church.
  - c. The report doesn’t answer its own questions: “If a teaching is declared to have confessional status, questions arise about what that means for those

who sign the Covenant for Officebearers (CFO) in the CRCNA. Will those who have already signed it need to accept this new item as having confessional status? What happens if they don't? Will those who subsequently sign the CFO need to accept this new item?" These questions are posed but not answered, leading to deep confusion as to the meaning of "confessional status."

2. Adopting recommendation D would elevate the HSR to a level comparable to our existing confessions. Designating the HSR as anything more than a position statement provided for pastoral guidance is an overreach.
  - a. Confessions are documents that bind us to a wider body of believers. Designating it as a "position statement" to be used for pastoral guidance is a more fitting approach.
  - b. Confessions are statements that fully confirm Biblical teaching. Synod 2016 placed limitations on the Committee that bound them to the CRC position on homosexuality established by Synod 1973. This prevented the Committee from coming up with a deeper understanding of Biblical teaching as it pertains to human sexuality.
  - c. Confessions are a joy to express. This declaration of confessional status will be embedded in a long denominational report and as such, will become difficult to access and hard to express.
  - d. Confessions are unifying. There is too much controversy and confusion surrounding the Human Sexuality Report and its recommendations for it to be declared as having confessional status.
3. Adopting Recommendation D would be following an unknown and unproven process.
  - a. The CRC has never adopted a new confession in its history. The CRC inherited the Three Forms of Unity when it split from the RCA in 1857. The CRC created a new, less authoritative category of "contemporary testimony" in 1986 when it accepted "Our World Belongs to God." The CRC completed an in-depth assessment of the Belhar Confession before Synod ultimately decided to adopt it as a contemporary testimony rather than a confession of the CRC in 2017. Adopting Recommendation D of the HSR would be an inappropriate process for declaring a new confession in a denomination that has historically been reluctant to do so. The Council of CCRC expects a higher level of care, conversation, and time to consider the Human Sexuality Report to have confessional status.
  - b. Adopting Recommendation D so soon does not give the church enough time to dwell with the report, to hear from those living a life of service within the church directly impacted by this report and to determine over time whether it

truly has confessional status. The process of accepting a confession takes much time and prayer in order to determine God's leading, more time than has been allotted for this decision.

4. Adopting Recommendation D would be a serious and harmful error.
  - a. It binds officebearers too strongly to a certain understanding of what the bible teaches around human sexuality. The church should remain open to ongoing learning in this area of study as it cares for its diverse members.
  - b. It complicates future discussion of alternate interpretations of the Bible's teaching on the complex issues related to human sexuality. It has a heavy-handed feel which will provoke deeper division in the denomination, not less. It attributes too much weight to this report too early and threatens to restrict further discussion.
  - c. Designating the HSR as a position statement will allow for further discussion and understanding among the variety of "minds" within the CRC on this matter.
  - d. If the HSR is recognized as having confessional status, many officebearers including pastors have expressed their inability to sign the Covenant for Officebearers. This would jeopardize the availability of many candidates that the Christian Reformed Church has historically called to lead the church.

In His Service

Council of Community Christian Reformed Church of Kitchener

January 11, 2022

\* cf. Status Confessionis and Confessional Status in the Christian Reformed Church: A Plea for Denominational Polity rather than Latin Rhetoric by Matt Lundberg

Final Draft