

Dear Classis Huron,

New Life CRC Guelph proposes the following overture:

Classis Huron requests the following from Synod 2023:

That Synod 2023 direct the denomination to:

- affirm our commitments to manage disagreements within our congregations, and amongst churches, with love, charity and grace, and ensure that all who seek to follow Christ are afforded a safe place to honestly share their views and listen to those of others; and
- develop resources and tools to equip congregations to minister pastorally with and to LGBTQ people.

Grounds:

- The Christian Reformed Church has failed in the way it relates to LGBTQ people. This is articulated in the discussion on homosexuality found in the HSR, which states: "*It is a sad truth that the Christian community, including our Christian Reformed denomination, has failed in its calling to empathize with, love, and bear the burdens of persons who are attracted to the same sex, making it very difficult for them to live a life of holiness.*" (HSR, p.95)
- Our congregation (and likely others) in Classis Huron has a considerable number of members who have expressed disappointment with Synod 2022's deliberations on the HSR.
- As a result, the potential for divisions has increased.

Background:

New Life CRC Guelph has established and undertaken a number of communication activities for our members to reflect and to communicate with Council related to Synod 2022's decisions regarding the Human Sexuality Report. These activities are outlined in some detail later in this letter.

Based on these activities, we observe the following:

- A number of New Life members who communicated to New Life Council are expressing disappointment with Synod's decisions. Many of these members are current or former office bearers and ministry leaders in the church. Many of the comments expressed included the desire to better pastorally engage with LGBTQ people, and the importance of signalling to Synod concerns with the outcomes of its decisions in 2022 related to the HSR.
- Some of the New Life members who communicated to New Life Council were supportive of the conclusions of the HSR.

- A variety of other feedback was received related to a number of topics including unity, division, the denomination, office-bearers, and other ministries of the church.
- Despite offering several methods and dates for communication, fewer than half of New Life members chose to participate in or communicate to Council through these Communication Activities since Synod 2022.

New Life members are not of one voice or opinion on this topic. And as Council we observe growing division within our congregation on this topic.

We also recognize that within Classis Huron there can be expected to be a diversity of views on this topic. As such we propose this overture to acknowledge division, and to seek to move forward pastorally.

Respectfully,



Angela Nywening, Clerk, New Life CRC Council

Appendix: New Life CRC Communication Activities Since Synod 2022

Following Synod 2022's decision, our Council of New Life CRC received 14 letters, most expressing strong concern or disappointment with Synod's approach and decision.

Our Council has deliberated on this topic, and has created a team to support Council and the congregation. In addition, our Pastoral Elders are reaching out to members to support, listen, and encourage engagement.

We reached out to some neighbouring CRC's to ask what they were doing in their response to Synod 2022.

This fall we completed several Conversational Circles, generally using the approach outlined by the denomination's Conversational Circles: Next Steps Deliberations. We had 66 participants attend Circles, as well as 11 participants who submitted responses through an online survey. As such we have feedback from 77 of our 196 members.

We provided links to further information on the HSR, perspectives on both affirming and traditional perspectives, and other denominational resources.

We hosted 3 prayer gatherings to further turn our hearts to God and call out through worship, intercessory prayer and listening prayer.