

## **CLASSIS HURON – February 15, 2023**

### Overture Advisory Committee Report

#### **A) 9.3 – Maitland River Community Church**

Observations: The advisory committee did not have the time to explore any precedents or practices elsewhere that may help in assessing these overtures. We also find grounds 2 of overture 1, 2 and 4 to be assumptions about means, not fitting grounds.

Recommendation:

The advisory committee recommends that Classis Huron withhold action on the overtures, and that classis refer them to the Financial Resources Team, to report back to the May 2023 meeting of Classis Huron.

Grounds:

1. The Financial Resources Team best serves classis with financial policy recommendations that impact all the churches of Classis Huron.
2. The Financial Resources Team can best serve classis with the time and contacts to determine practices and precedents, and to assess the ideas and their impacts.

#### **B) 7.1 – Community CRC, Kitchener**

Observations: Classis decides when an ordination as a commissioned pastor ends, even when the ministry position tied to the commissioned pastor ordination is eliminated. Also, Synod in 2017 indicated that the release of a commissioned pastor from a ministry position can be served by some of the guidelines of Article 17 being a template, rather than creating a whole new set of guidelines. We note that in Article 17, ministers automatically receive two years of continued ordination status.

Recommendation: The advisory committee recommends that Classis Huron adopt the overture, as amended by the advisory team.

Amended Overture: That Classis Huron postpone declaring the end of the ordination of Toyosi Awesu as a commissioned pastor for a period of *two years*.

Grounds:

1. Community CRC has provided the clear guidance of Synod 2016's and also the substantiation of Toyosi Awesu indicating to them his desire and intent to seek another ministry position.
2. Toyosi Awesu was serving in a primary pastoral leadership role, and so the timeframe from Article 17 serves as a suitable guideline for the length of maintaining his ordination.

### **C) 9.1 – New Life CRC, Guelph**

Background: We recognize the pain that this overture arises from and are proposing an amended version not out of any disagreement but in an effort to articulate some of it more clearly.

Recommendation: The advisory committee recommends that Classis Huron adopt the overture as amended by the advisory team.

Amended Overture: That Synod 2023 direct the appropriate agency or office of the CRCNA:

- 1) 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.
- 2) to develop resources and tools, *or endorse existing resources and tools*, to equip congregations to ministry pastorally with and to LGBTQ+ people.

Grounds:

1. *Congregations in Classis Huron (and likely in other classes) have a considerable number of members who have expressed disappointment with Synod 2022's deliberations and decisions on the HSR. As a result, there is a measure of division which has the potential to increase.*
2. 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)

### **D) 9.2 – Confessional-Revision Gravamen – Five officebearers from New Life CRC, Guelph**

Background: We recognize that Synod 2022's declaration of an interpretation of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 having confessional status has been equally applauded and challenged. We feel that a confessional-revision gravamen on this matter warrants a discussion on the floor of classis that is prompted by a positive recommendation rather than by a negative recommendation that could put the five officebearers from New Life in a defensive position for presentation and possibly create a more contentious discussion.

Recommendation: The advisory committee recommends that Classis Huron adopt the gravamen as an overture to Synod 2023.

Grounds:

1. The gravamen presents material to carefully consider in challenging the confessional nature of a synodical interpretation of a confession.
  2. The weighty and well-articulated gravamen warrants our respectful consideration on the floor of classis, with love, charity and grace marking the ways we express any differences.
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### **Overtures Advisory Committee – Delegates of Clinton and Owen Sound:**

Tom Bergstra, Ken Boers, Matt Bylsma, Ralph DeWeerd, Anita Prange, Pastor Ray Vander Kooij