**Overture to Classis Huron from New Life CRC, Guelph ON**

**January 2024**

Dear Classis Huron:

We propose the following overture:

**Overture:**

In response to Article 80 of the Acts of Synod 2023 (p 1032 – 1039), we call upon Synod 2024 to not implement any new acts of discipline or mandatory timelines for action related to churches or office-bearers deemed to be out of conformance with Synod 2022's conclusions, or for office-bearers who have offered a Confessional Difficulty Gravamen with regards to the confessional status of the Human Sexuality Report (HSR).

**Grounds:**

The Christian Reformed Church in North America is made up of a diverse community of churches and individuals seeking to understand God's teachings and God's will for our lives. Diversity enriches our faith and witness.

Decisions around the confessional status of the Human Sexuality Report have brought to light differences in perspective amongst individuals, congregations, and classes.  Within some churches there are sizable communities of people, including current office-bearers, holding differing views on this topic.  It is important to seek to agree upon foundational elements of our faith.  And it is also important to seek to live in fellowship together within individual churches, and as a broader denominational church.

Scripture encourages us to continue to grow and learn (2 Pet. 3:18; Phil. 1:9; Prov. 1:5).  Similarly, our Reformational heritage encourages us to continually be reformed by the Spirit of God through the Word.  It is important to create space that allows for humble wondering and doctrinal wrestling within the accountability structures of council, classis, and synod. “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12, NIV).

Applying a disciplinary approach with rigid timelines with respect to the HSR raises a serious risk of causing harm, of rushing action non-pastorally, and of causing damage to the body that may not be in alignment with God’s desire for how we proceed as a community.   Poorly contemplated and rushed discipline is likely to hurt people, fracture communities, and impact the church’s ministry and witness in our communities and our families.

Romans 14:19 (NIV) states “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”  For our denomination, and for individual churches, it is our hope that this may be a season of pursuing harmony and walking in humility as we seek a path that leads to peace and mutual edification.

**Background:**

In the fall of 2023, New Life CRC Guelph conducted a survey of church attendees.  The survey included several scenarios related to the HSR and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the life of the church.  In general, we discovered significant polarity.  Depending on the scenario presented, in some cases we found a high proportion of respondents would strongly agree with a scenario, while another high proportion of respondents would strongly disagree.   And yet we are a healthy worshiping community with strong bonds of fellowship and care. We expect that like New Life, some other churches will find themselves with similar polarized views as we have found in our church.  With this understanding of our church body, including amongst office-bearers, we feel that any action that seeks to rigorously enforce conformance with the HSR will result in significant division in our community.

Respectfully.



Angela Nywening, Clerk New Life CRC council