

November 19, 2021

General Synod Guelph 2022

Report re: Days of Prayer C.O. Art 54

Via electronic transmission only

Esteemed brothers:

On behalf of the Edmonton-Providence and Burlington/Waterdown-Rehoboth churches we offer the following report to general synod in respect to our assigned duties to be jointly responsible for calling days of prayer for the federation in accordance with Article 54 of the Church Order.

We can report that the global COVID-19 pandemic created cause for concern among the churches and prompted the following activity since General Synod Edmonton 2019:

On March 14, 2020, in response to the informal urging of churches across the federation, a day of prayer was called for Sunday, March 22, 2020 "in light of the COVID-19 reality that is sweeping across the country." As churches responsible we judged that when "we consider how the Coronavirus has disrupted the way of life in Canada, the United States, and throughout the world, the situation meets the prescribed criteria for a day of prayer. As Christians we do not need to panic, but we look to the LORD for help in this crisis and pray collectively as churches that the LORD may give healing to those who are sick, stop the spread of this virus, grant wisdom to our leaders, give calmness to people, bring back normalcy to our way of life, and cause our nations to look to him for help." All the churches in the federation were duly informed and were encouraged to formulate their liturgy locally for this service.

Pathway Christian Church submitted a letter dated December 11, 2020, with the endorsement of Classis Pacific East, requesting a day of prayer in response to ongoing harsh restrictions on gathering for worship and meeting in homes particularly in B.C., Manitoba and Alberta, as a hindrance to the ongoing pastoral care in the affected congregations. The concerns raised in the request were appreciated, yet they did differ from those of March, 2020 when little was known about the potential impact of the outbreak and the sense of fear that accompanied it. Consideration was given to the ongoing nature of a pandemic with thankfulness for the increasing public health knowledge as to how to deal with the spread of infection and the treatment of the sick, and for the alternate means of communication that have come to the fore to help us work through the times of gathering restrictions with our congregations. Additionally, the churches across the federation were experiencing the effects of restrictions at different times. It was determined that the request was a matter for ongoing prayer but not for a day of prayer based on the criteria of C.O. Article 54.

Covenant Canadian Reformed Church of Grassie submitted a letter dated January 5, 2021 requesting a day of prayer in regard to the ongoing pandemic with particular attention to the need for our communal humbling before the Lord with a plea for forgiveness in respect to the virus afflicting the church and the world, for the entreaty of our Father for the opportunity to return to weekly worship gathering in person, for the appeal to God to direct the hand of the government in dealing with the pandemic response and to consider the churches an "essential service", and for the unity of the churches in respect to the pandemic. The concerns raised in this request were acknowledged as reasons for ongoing local prayer as well as patient endurance as we all continue to

work locally through the pandemic. It was determined that the request did not meet the standard of C.O. Article 54 for a federation wide day of prayer.

The Canadian Reformed Church of Grand Valley submitted a letter on May 1, 2021 requesting a day of prayer considering that the pandemic was still underway over a year from its inception and it was still affecting the church and its members. The request included a wish to invite the United Reformed churches to participate in the day of prayer and to pray specifically for the governments, the medical officials and health workers, the churches and those affected with the Covid 19 virus. While recognizing the concerns raised as important for our ongoing prayer, it was determined that while the pandemic still has serious consequences, it is being increasingly understood and managed accordingly in our country providing optimism for the weeks ahead that we will incrementally be relieved of the social restrictions in place. A decision was made that the request did not meet the threshold of C.O. Article 54 to call for a day of prayer.

Brothers, since all the activity concerning the function of C.O. Article 54 in the past three years concerned the global pandemic and the effect on our churches and the world, we offer two additional comments:

- The day of prayer described in C.O. Article 54 historically has also been known to include a time of fasting. Although fasting is not typically practiced in the Canadian Reformed churches today, it does still hold that the function of the day of prayer includes humbling ourselves before the Lord and seeking forgiveness for our sins. There is a connection made between the time of acute distress which calls for the day of prayer in the churches and the reality of our collective sins contributing to the presence of the trouble. A number of the requests for a day of prayer in reference to the pandemic included additional notations to also make a public statement with a day of prayer by informing local politicians, providing media releases and engaging other federations in the calling of the day of prayer. We believe that this use of day of prayer is missing the mark for its solemn purpose for the churches to collectively come humbly before the Lord.
- Our hearts go out to all the churches and their communities throughout the federation and beyond as we continue to navigate the pandemic and all that it entails. It is our earnest prayer that the pandemic will come to a conclusion soon and through it we may all continue to experience the loving hand of our Father as he uses all things for the good of our salvation and for his glory.

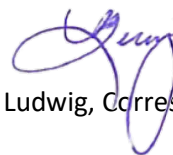
We thank you for the opportunity to serve the churches in this manner as we humbly submit this report on our activity.

With brotherly regards,

On behalf of the Councils of Edmonton-Providence and Burlington/Waterdown-Rehoboth,



Ron Bos, Corresponding Clerk (Providence)



Rick Ludwig, Corresponding Clerk (Rehoboth)