

APPENDIX III B 1 BOOK OF PRAISE REPORT 2 (CHURCH ORDER)

To the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches
to be held in Winnipeg 1989

From: Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*

Hamilton, June 24, 1988

Esteemed brothers,

MANDATE

Synod Burlington 1986 decided:

- a. "to pass on the linguistic changes proposed by br. Wildeboer to the Standing Committee for consideration of incorporation in the next printing of the *Book of Praise*" (*Acts*, Art. 93 D);
- b. to instruct the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* to include amendments in the next printing of the *Book of Praise* with respect to Articles 44, 13 and 72 of the Church Order. (See *Acts*, Art. 94 D, 95 D.D. respectively.)

The same sub-committee which had prepared Report 1 (Creeds) was also charged by the Standing Committee to fulfill the above mandate of Synod Burlington 1986.

COMMITTEE PROPOSALS

In the light of the mandate, the sub-committee included the amendments mentioned in b. above in the *Book of Praise* as it was reprinted since 1987. This action did not preclude our looking at these articles again if they came up in our work of considering the suggestions of br. R. Wildeboer.

As a result of studying br. Wildeboer's submission, we propose the following changes in certain articles of the Church Order with reasons given. On occasion we will make a comment if we are convinced that further attention should be given to a certain difficulty.

Art. 1

line 2, Drop the colon.

reason: It is better English.

line 4, Eliminate.

reason: This line is unnecessary.

The revised text reads:

"For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there be offices and supervision of doctrine; assemblies; worship, sacraments, and ceremonies; and discipline."

Art. 3

line 3, "male members" becomes "brothers."

line 4, eliminate "as."

reason: This is better English.

The revised sentence reads:

"Only those brothers shall be eligible for office who have made profession of faith and may be considered to meet the conditions set forth in Holy Scripture, e.g. in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1."

Art. 4

Eliminate all initial capitals in words immediately following the numbers 1, 2, and 3 after both A and B.

reason: This is better English.

B, line 3, read "... live, which examination ..."

B, line 6, end with semi-colon.

B, line 7, read "have served the churches . . ."

B, line 10, end with semi-colon followed by "or."
reason: This is better English.

Read "B. DECLARED ELIGIBLE" as follows:

"Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the Churches who

1. have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the documents necessary to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the Churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the Churches;
2. have served in churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship, and have been examined by the classis in which they live, with due observance of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for that purpose; or
3. have been examined according to the rule described in Article 8."

Read the rest of this article as follows:

"C. CALLING TWICE

The approval of Classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

D. COUNSELLOR

When a vacant Church extends a call, the advice of the counsellor shall be sought."
reason for the changes: It is better English.

Art. 5

Eliminate the initial capitals in the words immediately following the letters a and b under A.1.

reason: Better English

For the sake of clarity, present sections B, C, and D have been restructured as B.1,2, and C and some rephrasing has been done in present sections C and D.

The present sections B, C, and D now read as follows;

"B. Regarding those who are serving in the ministry the following shall be observed:

1. They shall be installed after classis has approved the call.
For this approbation as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration from the consistory with the deacons and from classis that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that Church and classis, or from the Church only, in case he remains within the same classis.
2. For the approbation by classis of a call of those who are serving in one of the churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain a sister-church relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
- C. Further, for the approbation by classis of a call, the calling Church shall submit a declaration that the proper announcements have been made and that the congregation has given its approval to the call."

Art. 6

end of line 1, add "either."

line 4, read "... gospel, or to be. . . ."

reason: It is clearer.

This article now reads:

"No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain Church, either to be stationed in a certain place, or to be sent out for the gathering of the Church from among the heathen or from among those who have become estranged from the gospel, or to be charged with some other special ministerial task."

Art. 13

For the sake of clarity, this article should be further amended (cf. General Synod Burlington 1986, *Acts*, Art. 95 D) to read as follows:

"If a minister of the Word retires because he reaches retirement age or because he is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office on account of age, illness, or disability, he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the Church which he served last. This Church shall provide honourably for his support or for that of his widow or dependants.

Retirement of a minister shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and with the concurring advice of classis and of deputies of regional synod."

Act. 14

Comment: We miss the equivalent of Art. 14 of the new Dutch Church Order of our sister churches regarding dismissal. The temporary release of our present article 14 is something different. The Dutch article 14 reads as follows: "De kerkeraad mag een predikant niet ontslaan van zijn verbintenis aan de gemeente zonder voorkennis en goedkeuring van de classis en de deputaten van de particuliere synode."

Art. 16

Repunctuate and rephrase so that there are only two semi-colons and no colon.

reason: It is clearer.

The revised article reads as follows:

"The specific duties of the office of minister of the Word are thoroughly and sincerely to proclaim to the congregation the Word of the Lord, administer the sacraments and publicly call upon the Name of God in behalf of the whole congregation; also to instruct the children of the Church in the doctrine of salvation, visit the members of the congregation in their homes, and comfort the sick with the Word of God; and further, together with the elders, to keep the Church of God in good order, exercise discipline, and govern the Church in such a manner as the Lord has ordained."

Art. 19

line 2, "the professors of theology" becomes "those ministers who are set apart for this training."

reason: Art. 2 no longer includes the office of Doctor.

Art. 21

line 2, add after "edifying word," "in the public worship services."

reason: It is clearer.

line 2, replace "also others" with "students of theology."

reasons: "Also" is unnecessary. "Students of theology" is more specific.

lines 3b and 4, eliminate

reason: It is unnecessary.

The revised article reads as follows:

"Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying

word in the public worship services, students of theology may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations."

Comment: In articles 8 and 21, the expression "to speak an edifying word" is a Dutchism and thus unclear in the English-speaking world. It could be replaced with something like "to exhort in the public worship services."

Art. 22

Repunctuate and rephrase, eliminating a colon and semi-colon.

reason: It is clearer.

The revised article reads as follows:

"The specific duties of the office of elder are, together with the ministers of the Word, to have supervision over Christ's Church, that every member may conduct himself properly in doctrine and life according to the gospel; and faithfully to visit the members of the congregation in their homes to comfort, instruct, and admonish them with the Word of God, reproving those who behave improperly. They shall exercise Christian discipline according to the command of Christ against those who show themselves unbelieving and ungodly and refuse to repent, and shall watch that the sacraments are not profaned. Being stewards of the house of God, they are further to take care that in the congregation all things are done decently and in good order, and to tend the flock of Christ which is in their charge. Finally, it is the duty of elders to assist the ministers of the Word with good counsel and advice and to supervise their doctrine and conduct."

Art. 23

Repunctuate and rephrase the first 5 lines.

reason: This is clearer.

The first five lines thus read as follows:

"The specific duties of the office of deacon are to see to the good progress of the service of charity in the congregation; to acquaint themselves with existing needs and difficulties and exhort the members of Christ's body to show mercy; and further, to gather and manage the offerings and distribute them in Christ's Name according to need."

Art. 26

line 3, "form(s)" become "form."

reason: The present formulation is unnecessary and could be confusing.

The last sentence should be split into two.

reason: It is clearer.

This last part then reads as follows:

"Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall, because of that very fact, be immediately suspended from office by the consistory with the deacons, and classis shall not receive him. If he obstinately persists in his refusal, he shall be deposed from office."

Art. 27

Rephrase the last part.

reason: Greater clarity is achieved.

This last part then reads as follows:

". . . admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in Christian teaching and family visiting."

Art. 31

Delete "ecclesiastical" from line 2.

reason: It is unnecessary. (Cf. the preceding articles and context.)

Art. 34

Transpose the essence of paragraph 4 of Art. 44 and of paragraph 2 of Art. 47 to this article about proceedings.

reason: Since these matters pertain to more than just classis (Art. 44) or the regional synod (Art. 47), they are more properly mentioned here. It is confusing to mention other major assemblies in Art. 44 about classis and Art. 47 about regional synod.

The enlarged article reads thus:

"The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with calling upon the Name of the Lord.

At the close of major assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof, or who have scorned the admonition of the minor assemblies.

Furthermore, each classis, regional synod, or general synod shall determine the time and place of the next classis, regional synod, or general synod respectively and appoint the convening church for that meeting."

Art. 35

Restructure and shorten.

reason: Such an elaborate a,b,c, and d enumeration is not used elsewhere in describing offices. Points c and d are included in point b and need not be repeated.

The revised article reads as follows:

"In all assemblies there shall be a president whose task it is to present and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with and to ensure that every one observes due order in speaking.

In major assemblies the office of president shall cease when the assembly has ended."

Art. 36

Delete the first word and capitalize the following article.

reason: "Also" is unnecessary.

Art. 42

line 6, Delete "also."

reason: "Also" is redundant.

Art. 44

Title should be "CLASSIS."

reason: This retains consistency with other headings.

The first sentence should be restructured.

reasons: This is clearer. The matter of determining the time and place of a meeting has now been dealt with in Art. 34.

The first part of this article now reads as follows:

"Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating with proper credentials a minister and an elder or, if a church has no minister, two elders. Such

meetings shall be held at least once every three months . . ."

The third paragraph has been amended in accordance with the decision of General Synod Burlington 1986, *Acts*, Art. 94, with further changes for linguistic reasons.

The third paragraph now reads:

"The president shall ask whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their Church."

The fourth paragraph is now abbreviated due to transferring most of it to Art. 34. This paragraph now reads as follows:

"The last classis before regional synod shall choose delegates to that synod."

In the fifth paragraph, "the classical meetings" becomes "classis."

reason: This is more accurate.

Art. 45

line 2, eliminate "it desires as such."

reason: This phrase is ambiguous.

line 3, eliminate "maintaining good order."

reason: This formulation is too broad.

The revised article reads as follows:

"Each vacant Church shall request classis to appoint a minister as counsellor, to the end that he may assist the consistory in the matter of the calling of a minister and also sign the letter of call."

Art. 46

line 7, change the semi-colon after "respect" to a comma.

reason: The semi-colon is unnecessary.

Art. 47

Paragraph 1 assumes that two classes per regional synod is normal. This situation, however, can change and it would be better to list the different possibilities clearly without assuming knowledge of the situation as it now exists.

The revised paragraph 1 now reads as follows:

"Each year some neighbouring classes shall send delegates to meet in a regional synod. If there are two classes, each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders. If there are three classes, the number shall be three ministers and three elders. If there are four or more classes, the number shall be two ministers and two elders."

The present paragraph 2 has been eliminated since its contents are now in Art. 34.

The present paragraph 3 should have all references to general synod dropped since general synod is dealt with in Art. 49 where these matters can be included.

This paragraph now reads as follows:

"If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening Church shall determine the time and place with the advice of classis."

The last paragraph now reads as follows:

"The last regional synod before the general synod shall choose delegates to that general synod."

reason: The style is improved.

Art. 48

paragraph 1, repunctuate

reason: The dashes are unnecessary.

The revised paragraph 1 now reads as follows:

"Each regional synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order and, upon the request of the classes, in cases of special difficulties."

paragraph 2, line 2, eliminate "on them" after "report."

reason: These words are unnecessary.

paragraph 2 and 3, change "synod" to "regional synod."

reason: Ambiguity is removed.

The revised paragraphs 2 and 3 read as follows:

"These deputies shall keep proper record of their actions and submit a written report to regional synod, and, if so required, they shall give account of their actions.

They shall not be discharged from their task before and until regional synod itself discharges them."

Art. 55

The English of this article is awkward. The revised article reads as follows:

"The metrical Psalms adopted by general synod as well as the Hymns approved by general synod shall be sung in the worship services."

Art. 57

line 1, replace "ensure" by "see to it."

reason: "Ensure" is too strong.

line 2, insert "is" before "feasible."

reason: This is better English.

The revised article reads as follows:

"The consistory shall see to it that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as is feasible."

Art. 58

line 1, replace "ensure" by "see to it."

reason: "Ensure" is too strong.

line 3, make "Church" and the following words plural.

reason: This is in accordance with the rest of our Church Order.

The revised article reads as follows:

"The consistory shall see to it that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the Churches have summarized it in their confessions."

Art. 63

line 1, replace "ensure" by "see to it."

reason: "Ensure" is too strong.

lines 2 and 3, eliminate "-as authorized by the consistory-."

reason: These words are unnecessary. It is the Word of God, not the consistory, which tells the ministers to do so.

The revised first paragraph of this article reads as follows:

"The consistory shall see to it that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers solemnize only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God."

Art. 68

lines 3 and 4 need to be rephrased.
reason: The English will be clearer.

Revised lines 3 and 4 read as follows:

"If he continues to harden himself in sin, the consistory shall so inform the congregation by means of public announcements, in order that the congregation. . . ."

lines 9 and 10 as well as lines 19 and 20, replace the dashes with commas.

reason: The dashes are unnecessary.

Art. 69

lines 5 and 6, replace the dashes with commas.

reason: The dashes are unnecessary.

Art. 71

line 7, change "the elders and deacons" to "elders or deacons."

reason: Greater clarity is achieved.

Art. 72

3rd last line, change punctuation.

reason: This gives consistency with the punctuation elsewhere.

The revised part reads as follows:

". . . enriching oneself, and further, all such sins . . ."

CONCLUSION

We would like to request that a member of the sub-committee be given the privilege of the floor at Synod, in order to answer any questions and partake in the discussions of this report.

Yours in Christ's service,

Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*

W. Helder (convener)
J. De Jong
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APPENDIX III B 2
SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT ON THE CHURCH ORDER

To the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches
to be held in Winnipeg 1989
From: Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*
Hamilton, January 16, 1989

Esteemed brothers,

Because of reactions received to our report on the Church Order we are herewith passing on to you further changes we propose to the wording of the Church Order.

With brotherly greetings
Standing Committee for *Book of Praise*

W. Helder (convener)
J. De Jong
M. Kampen
C. Van Dam
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J. Van Huisstede
J. Faber (reporter)

Art. 2

This article should be expanded to read as follows:

"The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon. Some ministers shall be set apart for the training for the ministry and others for the work of mission."

reason: This addition properly anticipates later discussion in the Church Order (Articles 18 and 19).

Art. 12

Change the title to "Permanent Release"

reason: This is the main element. The present title only takes a subsidiary element from this article.

Synod could consider whether the formulation of Article 12 could not be made more general in agreement with the corresponding article of the Dutch sister churches so that it covers more cases than of those ministers who enter upon another vocation.

Art. 19

Read the article as follows:

"The Churches maintain an institution for the training of the ministry and set apart some ministers for this purpose. It is their task as professors of theology to expound the Holy Scripture, to vindicate the sound doctrine against heresies and errors, and in general to instruct students in such a manner that the churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfil the duties of their office."

reasons: 1. It is not necessary to specify that "the Churches *shall* maintain an institution," since a special institution as such has not always existed and may in the future also be taken away. Nevertheless, there must remain a training for the ministry.
2. With this description of the task, the good element of Art. 18 of the old Church Order is maintained.
3. This revision makes clear that the ministers referred to are the "special" ministers of Art. 2.

Art. 21

In the revised article, add "and candidates for the ministry" after "students of theology."
reason: They were not covered in the revised text.

The revised article now reads as follows:

"Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying word in the public worship services, students of theology and candidates for the ministry may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations."