

Report of the Commission on Theology

The Commission on Theology (COT) met October 17–19, 2019, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in conjunction with the annual joint meeting of all General Synod commissions and the General Synod Council (GSC), and January 24–25, 2019, in Chicago, Illinois.

The COT is honored to serve the church through its theological reflection and humbled by such responsibility and trust. The commission seeks to fulfill its tasks with integrity and faithfulness. The commission's primary task this year was assigned by General Synod 2019. The commission also took part in other work related to its charter as a commission.

Referral Regarding Postmodernism and the Church

Stemming from the president's report at General Synod 2019, ONB 19-5 was passed, which instructed the Commission on Theology, "in consultation with the Commission on History and the professorate, to prepare or recommend a study on postmodernism and its history, beliefs, and relationship to Christianity as a resource for churches to understand the world we live in and to help devise ways to reach people for Christ who are living under this prevailing philosophy, for report to General Synod 2021" (*MGS 2019*, p. 130). In October, the Commission on Theology met with members of the Commission on History and the professorate—as well as General Synod 2019 president James Nakakihara—to discuss postmodernism and the church. COT is grateful for the discussion and contributions of those two bodies and synod's past president.

In light of the complexity of postmodernism and contemporary ideologies, the diversity of understandings of the nature of postmodernism, as well as the plethora of suggested responses to it, the Commission on Theology decided that recommending a study on postmodernism was preferable to preparing a new one. To this end, the commission members were tasked with researching various resources that have sought to explain and engage postmodernism for the sake of sharing the gospel in our times and with the current and upcoming generations. At our January meeting, the commission members presented their findings, which were compiled into annotated bibliography. In the next year, the commission plans to continue research and to sift the available resources in order to provide the best recommendations for the church as it seeks to reach people for Christ. The commission plans to have this work completed for presentation at General Synod 2021.

Ongoing Work

In order to help new members on the commission, a document called "Introduction to the Commission on Theology" was created to explain the nature of the commission's work, how it is composed, and the way it conducts its work. In October, the Commission on Theology met with representatives from GSC as part of the five-year review of COT by GSC.

In 2018, it was noted that the current issues facing the denomination were related to prior questions about the nature, scope, and source of authority within the church. In order to foster discussion around this issue, the commission read Molly Worthen's *Apostles of Reason*, which is an in-depth history of Evangelicalism in the United States.

The commission always welcomes appropriate inquiries of theological significance from members of the RCA, and it continues to trust that its work serves the church in its mission and gives glory to its head, Jesus Christ.

Acknowledgments

In closing, the commission offers thanks to Dr. Laird Edman, professor of psychology at Northwestern College; Dr. Mark Husbands, president of Trinity Western University; and Rev. Dr. Suzanne McDonald, professor of systematic and historical theology at Western Theological Seminary, for their faithful and fruitful service. Their membership on the Commission on Theology is ending and the commission is sincerely and deeply grateful for their gifts, their good humor, and their generous and significant contributions to life of the church, especially the ministry of the RCA. The commission also offers thanks to Rev. Terry DeYoung, staff to the commission, for his constant and effective guidance of its work.