CALL TO ORDER

The president called to order the ninth meeting of the General Synod at 6:59 p.m. on Saturday, October 16, 2021. The Rev. Dr. Ted Vande Berg, regular delegate from the Classis of the Southwest, offered prayer.

The General Synod viewed a brief video presentation highlighting an RCA missionary.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, CONTINUED


RF 21-3 was presented to the house (GS Workbook pp. 103-112). Rev. Smith summarized highlights and common themes regarding RF 21-3 from the discernment groups.

A motion was made and supported from the floor to amend RF 21-3 as follows (addition is underlined):

“The regulations proposed below are provided to classes considering applications from member churches of the classis for leave to withdraw from the denomination. The Commission on Church Order remains available to provide advisory responses to requests for interpretation of the provisions of the BCO as well as these regulations. Requests for transfers are only considered when a consistory files an application following the process outlined in the BCO and if there is no outstanding judicial business. There is no provision in the BCO for churches to transfer other than one church at a time or for a church to become “independent,” that is, to transfer out of the denomination without joining another
denomination. *The Dictionary of Christianity in America* defines denomination as “an association or fellowship of congregations within a religion…”

**VOTED:** Not to adopt the motion (yes 60; no 143).

RF 21-3 in its original form was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt RF 21-3 (yes 182; no 25).

**REPORT ON DISPOSITION OF NEW BUSINESS**

The president invited the Rev. Ned Beadel, moderator of the General Synod Council and moderator of the General Synod Council serving as the Executive Committee of the General Synod, to present recommendations regarding the four items of new business presented on Friday.

The first item of new business presented on Friday was as follows:

“To send a formal communication from the General Secretary and President of General Synod to the White House, the Department of State, and the Department of Homeland Security, to express the biblical reasons for supporting a Humanitarian Moratorium on forced returns to Haiti until proper asylum screenings are implemented for all.

And further, to ask the general secretary to set aside time for us as a synod to pray for Haitians seeking asylum at the southern border of the U.S.”

In response to the foregoing (referred to by the Committee of Reference as item #1), the Committee of Reference recommended:

**EC 21-24**

To accept item #1 as new business and to refer it to the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business for report back to this session of the General Synod.

**Reason:**
The humanitarian crisis in Haiti is a development that has arisen recently, and as such, it seems to the Committee of Reference that this could not have been presented through normal channels.

EC 21-24 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 21-24 (Committee of Reference on New Business) (yes 185; no 19).
The second item of new business presented on Friday was as follows:

“To instruct the General Synod Council, in consultation with all necessary commissions, staff, and legal counsel, to dissolve the Reformed Church in America and return all assets to the churches on a per-member basis.

This was not able to come as an overture because the Vision 2020 report was not made available until July of 2020, in the midst of a pandemic, which has limited our ability to convene as a classis. Furthermore, Classis Illiana has endured significant losses and is struggling to fill leadership positions and perform its basic function in the face of a pandemic.

Also, before General Synod 2020, classes were discouraged from sending in overtures, limiting our ability to present this business through the regular process.”

In response to the foregoing (referred to by the Committee of Reference as item #2), the Committee of Reference recommended:

EC 21-25
To not accept item #2 as new business.

Reason:
While we sympathize with the challenges posed by the pandemic, there have been 15 months since the Vision 2020 report was published (as noted in the reasons presented within the new business, it was first published in July 2020), so there was time for this to be brought through the ordinary means provided in the BCO (the assemblies, agencies, or commissions of the church).

EC 21-25 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 21-25 (Committee of Reference on New Business) (yes 183; no 20).

The third item of new business presented on Friday was as follows:

“To instruct delegates to follow their conscience and refrain from speaking or voting on matters related to the future of the RCA if they have already decided to leave the RCA.”

In response to the foregoing (referred to by the Committee of Reference as item #3), the Committee of Reference recommended:
EC 21-26
To not accept item #3 as new business.

Reason:
This does not qualify as new business, as it could have been brought up in time to come to the synod through the assemblies, agencies, or commissions of the church.

EC 21-26 was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt EC 21-26 (Committee of Reference on New Business) (yes 189; no 13).

The fourth item of new business presented on Friday was as follows:

“In response to GSC 21-21
To encourage the General Synod Council’s Investment Advisory Committee to add fossil fuels to its current list of restricted investments, to begin divestment from any fossil fuel investments and

To begin considering ‘impact investing’ (a defined term in the investment world), a form of positive screening, rather than just exclusionary screening, as a socially, faithfully and fiscally responsible investment policy for the RCA going forward.”

In response to the foregoing (referred to by the Committee of Reference as item #4), the Committee of Reference recommended:

EC 21-27
To not accept item #4 as new business.

Reason:
This does not qualify as new business, as it could have been brought up in time to come to the synod through the assemblies, agencies, or commissions of the church.

EC 21-27 was presented to the house.

VOTED: To adopt EC 21-27 (Committee of Reference on New Business) (yes 138; no 69).

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SYNOD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, CONTINUED
The president invited the Rev. Ned Beadel, moderator of the General Synod Council and moderator of the General Synod Council serving as the
Executive Committee of the General Synod, to continue its report (GS Workbook pp. 38-115).

EC 21-16 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 21-16 (GS Workbook p. 49) (yes 198; no 5).

EC 21-17 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 21-17 (GS Workbook p. 49) (yes 194; no 10).

EC 21-18 was presented to the house.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 21-18 (GS Workbook p. 50) (yes 188; no 18).

EC 21-23 was presented to the house (GS Workbook p. 54).

A motion was made and supported from the floor to amend EC 21-23 as follows (additions are underlined, deletions are stricken):

“To instruct the General Synod Council (GSC) to form a working group of 12 members, plus a facilitator, to seek clarity and resolution around the concerns that have been expressed to the GSC by the Commission on History, particularly with relation to oversight of the archives as well as what constitutes archival records, and related costs. This group would include three members of the Commission on History, three members of the General Synod Council, three members of the Commission on Church Order, and three GSC staff members, the denominational legal counsel, the current archivist, and the archivist emeritus, and would plan to meet via electronic means. The first meeting of this working group should take place before December 31, 2021.”

**VOTED:** To adopt the motion (yes 174; no 29).

EC 21-23 as amended was presented to the house:

To instruct the General Synod Council (GSC) to form a working group of 12 members, plus a facilitator, to seek clarity and resolution around the concerns that have been expressed to the GSC by the Commission on History, particularly with relation to oversight of the archives. This group would include three members
of the Commission on History, three members of the General Synod Council, three members of the Commission on Church Order, and, the denominational legal counsel, the current archivist, and the archivist emeritus, and would plan to meet via electronic means. The first meeting of this working group should take place before December 31, 2021.

**VOTED:** To adopt EC 21-23 as amended (yes 19; no 11).

**RECESS**

The president declared the General Synod recessed at 8:12 p.m., following prayer by Willie Si, regular delegate from the Regional Synod of Canada.