

Report of the Commission on Church Order

The Commission on Church Order (CCO) is responsible for “making recommendations concerning the content, structure, and style of the *Book of Church Order*” (*BCO*) and for providing “advisory responses to requests for interpretation of the *Book of Church Order*” (*BCO*, Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 4b [2021 edition, p. 114]). To fulfill these responsibilities, the CCO met in person on November 11 through 13, 2021, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and in a series of three Zoom video conferences (December 10, 2021; February 10, 2022; March 1, 2022). On several other occasions, the commission consulted with General Synod officers, General Synod Council (GSC) staff, as well as officers and members of other assemblies, agencies, commissions, and institutions—sometimes informally and other times more formally—to provide advisory responses.

Referrals from General Synod 2021

The CCO received one direct referral from the 2021 General Synod (ONB 21-10) and was instructed to consult or appoint delegates to task forces completing the work of three other referrals (EC 21-23, RF 21-1, and TE 21-5).

ONB 21-10 Affinity Regional Synods

In response to an overture that proposed to restructure the denomination using affinity synods, the 2021 General Synod voted:

To direct the RF 21-1 team to consider affinity regional synods in accordance with principles 1 and 4 of the Vision 2020 report; and further,

To instruct the Commission on Church Order and the Commission on Theology to study the structure and implications of affinity synods, with a report to General Synod in 2022. (*MGS 2021*, ONB 21-10, p. 123)

In the relatively recent history of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), we are not the first to think about a significant restructuring of regional synods. In fact, the purpose of regional synods has been questioned throughout the entirety of their existence. Going forward, important questions remain. The restructuring of regional synods, affinity based or otherwise, is part of a larger conversation ignited by the Vision 2020 Report, which identified as one of the four guiding principles for the RF 21-1 restructuring team the need to evaluate “the viability, responsibility, and effectiveness of regional synods and General Synod,” noting specifically that “our research shows that the future RCA will not be large enough to sustain the regional synod assembly” (*MGS 2021*, p. 91). This report will focus on the benefits and challenges of organizing regional synods by affinity.

What Do We Mean by Affinity?

The use of affinity as an organizing principle suggests that the structure of RCA assemblies will be less dependent on geography and more dependent on relationships centered around some other characteristics and core values, or mission priorities and practices, that an assembly may adopt. In the past, regional synods and classes have been discouraged from pursuing ministry across geographic bounds without the permission of the other assemblies. For example, the *BCO* includes the following provision: “When an organizing church is initiated by a classis not

within the classis's own geographic area, the initiating classis shall receive the permission of the classis in which it intends to initiate its ministry" (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 8, Section 6 [2021 edition, p. 39]). While clear communication between assemblies remains a necessity, it is accurate to say that the assemblies of the RCA already have adopted affinity as an organizing principle (e.g., the Classis of the City is organized primarily around mission to urban city centers and the Classis of the Americas is organized primarily around ethnicity). It is also accurate to say that the General Synod has approved the transfer of churches between classes and the transfer of classes between regional synods regardless of geographic proximity (e.g., most recently, transferring Addisville Reformed Church from the Classis of Delaware-Raritan to the Classis of Central California in 2021 and transferring the Classis of the City from the Regional Synod of the Far West to the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics in 2018).

What Are the Roles and Responsibilities of Synods?

Regional synods are an assembly, can be a judicatory, and may develop a programmatic structure. In the late 1990s, a task force studying the purposes of regional synods noted the critical distinction between the responsibility to superintend and supervise (what it called "governmental structures") and the role of mobilizing specific ministries (what it called "programmatic structures"). As an assembled body of elders and ministers, the regional synod exercises "a general superintendence" over its classes (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part III, Article 2, Section 1 [2021 edition, p. 65]). The regional synod acting as a judicatory exercises "an appellate supervisory power over the acts, proceedings, and decisions" of its classes (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part III, Article 2, Section 2 [2021 edition, p. 65]). Notably, the task force reported that the regional synod's role as an intermediary appellate judicatory (or as the final court of appeal for cases originating with the board of elders) has "never been doubted" (*MGS* 2000, p. 432).

While their governmental structures have remained fairly consistent over time, in many ways their programmatic function has changed significantly and varies widely. It is fairly evident that there is significant variation in the self-determined functions of the eight regional synods today. The reason for that is the broad provision in the *BCO* allowing a regional synod to "create whatever organization it desires for the furtherance of the work of the gospel within its bounds, provided such organization does not infringe upon the prerogatives of the several classes or churches" (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part III, Article 2, Section 5 [2021 edition, p. 66]).

What Are Some Benefits of Affinity Synods?

The answer to this question may vary depending upon the particular role of the regional synod being considered. Administratively, it may be prudent to have the regional synod aligned with certain theological convictions shared by all of its classes (this may naturally develop if there is a significant reorganization of the denomination into affinity classes, since a regional synod is constituted by elder and minister delegates from its several classes). It seems more likely that affinity synods would be helpful for the peace of the church judicially and programmatically. An affinity-based commitment to a common understanding of the application of the gospel may make it easier for the regional synod to organize and accomplish its missions and programs in a united way.

Judicially, when the synod considers complaints against a classis or appeals from the action of a classis, the cases would be considered from a common frame of reference and a similar

understanding of biblical accountability. It is worth noting that our order already provides a way to respect the decisions made by the classis even though the regional synod as a whole may disagree. In describing the process for appeals, the *BCO* states that the “judicatory hearing the appeal shall give deference to the decision of the lower judicatory” (*BCO*, Chapter 2, Part III, Article 2, Section 11 [2021 edition, p. 97]). If this principle is applied more broadly to all judicial business, and if additional limitations were added to the *BCO* to specify affinity synods as the final judicatory in certain matters beyond cases originating with a board of elders (e.g., decisions related to ordination and marriage), then the regional synod (and, by extension, the General Synod) could be spared contentious debate.

What Are Some Concerns of Affinity Synods?

As the commission considered the use of affinity as an organizing principle for regional synods, we wondered what an appropriate basis would be for determining an assembly’s primary affinities. Furthermore, once a determination is made and a restructuring based on affinities begins, where should that process end? Designating affinities at the regional synod level may introduce considerable uncertainty that, in turn, would ultimately lead to demands for further restructuring—how frequently should the primary affinities be allowed to change? Other considerations worth noting, perhaps not direct concerns about affinity synods themselves but about the transitional process into affinity synods, include clear implications for current regional synod staff as well as a need to review the effects on membership or representation on other assemblies, agencies, and boards.

Would Affinity Synods be an Effective Means of Restructuring the RCA?

As noted earlier, we are not the first to be thinking about a significant restructuring of regional synods. The aforementioned Task Force on the Responsibilities and Purposes of Regional Synods and Classes concluded in its final report to the 2000 General Synod:

In sum, the task force, having conducted reviews of the responsibilities and purposes of the regional synods and classes, affirms the positive roles that regional synods play in the RCA today. Classes and regional synods need to be in constant conversation so that synods do not infringe upon the prerogatives of the several classes or churches within their bounds. As to the relationships between regional synods and the General Synod, the task force notes that what is most needed is regular conversation around strategic planning and a shared sense of vision for the ministry of the RCA (*MGS 2000*, p. 434).

The commission believes that the assemblies should be in constant communication; in particular, the time is right for the regional synods, in consultation with their classes, to be proactive in considering the optimal size of a classis. When is a classis too small to effectively carry out its task of superintendence and supervision for the wellbeing of its ministers and congregations? Is it possible for a classis to be too large? Is there a minimum number of classes required for a regional synod? Additionally, it was a mere three years ago that the Commission on Church Order, together with the Commission on Theology, presented a report on the meaning of the word “bounds” in the *BCO* (see *MGS 2019*, pp. 238-245, for the full report). In response to the report, the 2019 General Synod adopted the following recommendation (CO 19-2):

To advise regional synods to be guided by the following policies in forming, combining, and disbanding of classes and the transfer of churches between classes:

1. Classes should be created, maintained, and structured so that they can fulfill their primary calling—guidance and governance.
2. Ethnic classes should be formed only after prayerful discernment and with caution.
3. The creation and structure of classes should seek to maintain the unity, purity, and peace of the church.
4. Classes should be created, maintained, and structured so that all the gifts of congregations can be fully received.

The commission reaffirms this advice and believes it would be helpful to apply this advice to any consideration of restructuring regional synods. The synods exist for the benefit of the church but are not the essence of the church (as concluded by Allan Janssen in *Constitutional Theology*, second edition, pp. 215–216 [Reformed Church Press, 2019]). It seems unwise to spend significant time restructuring regional synods if they are in fact going to be eliminated as part of the broader denominational restructuring being considered. However, if they are to be eliminated, the governmental responsibilities currently delegated to the regional synods will need to be assigned either to the classes or to the General Synod.

Ultimately, while it is clear that the General Synod can “form regional synods” and “make changes in their boundaries” (BCO, Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 2, Section 3 [2021 edition, p. 69]), it is less clear how beneficial doing so based on affinity would actually be. Is the existence of regional synods in general, or affinity synods in particular, a problem to be solved or a reality to be embraced? The commission believes the answer to this question depends largely on the RF 21-1 restructuring team conversations as it considers the role that affinity will have both in the structure of classes and regional synods. We trust that God’s Spirit is working through the process, and the commission will provide further advisory responses or facilitate drafting proposed amendments to the Constitution of the RCA if instructed to do so.

EC 21-23 RCA Archives Task Force

The commission designated members Brian Andrew, Christopher Jacobsen, and Joshua Scheid to serve on the working group to seek clarity and resolution of the concerns expressed to the General Synod Council (GSC) by the Commission on History regarding the denominational archives. Over the course of four meetings, the task force identified short-term management concerns and recommended that the GSC monitor compliance with current archives policies. The task force also identified longer-term concerns related to staffing, oversight, and financing of the archives that warrant further consideration.

RF 21-1 Restructuring Plan for the RCA

At its November meeting, the commission met with general secretary Eddy Alemán to discuss the formation and responsibility of the restructuring task force. The commission recommended that the General Synod Council (GSC) not appoint a specific member of the commission to the task force, but instead that the commission will make one or more of its members available to the task force, understanding that the number or relevant experience and expertise to best serve the task force may vary as the work progresses.

TE 21-5 Proposed Amendments to the Organizational Documents of Western Theological Seminary

The commission designated members Jennifer Van Regenmorter and Joshua Scheid to serve as liaisons in consultation with the General Synod Council (GSC) regarding the Board of Trustees' request for Western Theological Seminary (WTS) to become an independent but officially related seminary of the RCA. The commission prepared several iterations of a document designed to facilitate discussion between the GSC and the WTS board. The commission's goal was to help the GSC, WTS board, and ultimately the General Synod itself think about the considerations and understand the implications of the request in order to make an informed decision. The substance of that document is included in the GSC report.

Timing for Submission of Reports and Overtures

Amid the numerous inquiries into the peculiar circumstances of holding a postponed session of General Session in 2021, the commission identified a need to review the appropriateness of references to deadlines in the *BCO*, particularly as they relate to such things as reports, overtures, and classis votes on constitutional amendments.

Ironically, the word "deadline" does not appear in the *BCO*, although there are many references to the minimum required or maximum allowable time periods for certain actions. Rather than naming a particular date, most of the deadlines described in the *BCO* require some calculation, providing sufficient specificity yet suitable flexibility. The timing for the submission of overtures to the General Synod has two unusual characteristics: the section provides a specific date for classes while a calculated date for regional synods, which raises questions regarding the effect of this provision when submitting overtures to postponed or special sessions of the General Synod; and twice the word "postmarked" is used, suggesting that overtures must be physically delivered by the U.S. Postal Service or similar logistics service. Of course, much has changed in recent years and most communication between assemblies of the RCA is usually accomplished by email. After consulting with officers and staff of various assemblies regarding the appropriateness and practical implications of this section, the commission presents the following recommendation:

CO 22-1

To approve the following amendment to the *Special Rules of Order of the General Synod* in the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 3, Part II, Article 2, Section 7 (2021 edition, p. 130) for submission to the next General Synod for final approval (additions are underlined; deletions are stricken):

Section 7. Submission of Overtures

The General Synod may receive overtures from a classis or a regional synod. It shall not receive overtures which deal with matters under adjudication or which make either direct or implied charges against persons. Overtures from classes shall be submitted to the General Synod office ~~or postmarked not no~~ later than March 31~~two months before a session of General Synod~~. Overtures from regional synods shall be submitted to the General Synod office ~~or postmarked within ten days of the close of the annual session of the~~

regional synodno later than three weeks before a session of General Synod.

Additionally, the commission believes that the deadline for submission of reports to the General Synod is ambiguous. Currently, the deadline is “three months before synod opens.” However, in the event of a postponed session, does that mean three months prior to the opening of the session that will be adjourned or three months prior to the opening of the postponed session (which could result in a significantly different deadline; for example, in 2021, the difference was approximately three months)? To provide a clearer deadline and consistent language with the deadline for the submission of overtures, the commission presents the following recommendation:

CO 22-2

To approve the following amendment to the *Special Rules of Order of the General Synod* in the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 3, Part II, Article 2, Section 5 (2021 edition, p. 129) for submission to the next General Synod for final approval (additions are underlined; deletions are stricken):

Section 5. Preparation of Reports

Reports shall ordinarily be reviewed by the reporting agency. If this has not taken place, a statement shall be appended to the end of the report, indicating: who wrote the report, who reviewed the report, and who approved the report. Reports to General Synod shall be submitted to the General Synod office three months before synod opens a session of General Synod.

Advisory Responses to Requests for Interpretation

The commission received several inquiries related to the interpretation or application of the BCO. What follows is a summary of some of the more significant advisory responses provided by the commission.

Status of Minister When a Church Affiliates with Another Denomination

Following the 2021 General Synod’s adoption of the RF 21-3 Rules and Regulations for gracious separation, the commission received a number of questions about the appropriate status for ministers of Word and sacrament who, for one reason or another, wish to remain members of the classis even though the congregations they serve have withdrawn from the RCA to affiliate with another denomination (the commission is careful to note that a consistory’s petition to withdraw, and the action of the classis on it, is a separate process from the transfer of a minister).

The commission advised that a minister may remain a member of the classis and that the classis may act at its discretion in the supervision of its enrolled ministers; indeed, the classis must act consistent with its ongoing ability to function appropriately. The classis has three options: (1) it may officially recognize the minister as a specialized minister actively serving in a ministry that is not under the jurisdiction of the classis; (2) it may classify the minister as without charge, which indicates a minister is either (a) currently between called or contracted ministry

positions, or (b) active but not serving in a ministry approved or commissioned by the classis; or (3) pursue charge and discipline, presumably for desertion of office. Each of these options has different implications for the classis to consider, including but not limited to classis voting and quorum requirements, a minister's eligibility for life and long-term disability insurance through the Board of Benefits Services, and retirement contributions. An expanded advisory response document was distributed to all stated clerks, and it may be requested from the commission moderator.

Statistical Reporting and Assessments for Affiliated Churches

Following the approval of the new *BCO* article on affiliated churches (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 9 [2021 edition, pp. 28-29]), stated clerks and GSC staff asked the commission for an advisory interpretation of the provision's implications for statistical reporting and assessments. The act of dual affiliation requires approval by official action of the classis. For an RCA church that is dually affiliating with another denomination, there should be no change in the reporting of revenues and membership. Dual affiliation is intended to aid the congregation in its local, contextual ministry, but it does not circumvent the accountability and responsibility of the consistory and its ministers to the classis and the Constitution of the RCA. The commission acknowledges that the provision for receiving a non-RCA congregation as a dually affiliated church is less than clear and has requested feedback from stated clerks to help the commission consider clarification in the year ahead. An expanded advisory response document was distributed to all stated clerks, and it may be requested from the commission moderator.

References to Sessions and Meetings in the *BCO*

When working through the various issues related to the cancellation and postponement of the 2020 and 2021 General Synods, the commission became aware that the varying references to sessions of General Synod in the *BCO* (e.g., sessions, stated sessions, special sessions, annual sessions, regular sessions) are not always consistent or correct. Sometimes "session" is used but "meeting" is the appropriate term; other times "meeting" is used but "session" is the appropriate term. For many assemblies in the RCA, the session and meeting often coincide, but the two are distinct parliamentary terms. A *session* is a complete unit of proceedings of an assembly, which may consist of one or more connected *meetings* (most notably, each annual General Synod is a single session made up of a series of meetings over several days). The commission reviewed all 162 occurrences of "session," "meeting," and their variations for appropriateness, identifying a number of corrections and clarifications which are detailed as items #4 through #10 in the editorial changes section below. Four of the occurrences are not included in the editorial changes reported below because they are already included in amendments that either were adopted by the 2021 General Synod and sent to the classes for approval or are proposed to the 2022 General Synod.

Additions and Revisions to the *BCO* Glossary

The commission updated several entries in the glossary that is now included as a non-constitutional resource in the digital and print versions of the *BCO*. All the updates appeared in the 2021 edition of the *BCO*, except for the revision to the entry for "session," which will be included in the next edition. The commission approved the following revisions to existing entries (additions are underlined; deletions are stricken):

affiliate. *verb* The act of joining or creating a relationship with a church, assembly, or denomination. (1.II.10; 1.II.14)

session. A complete unit of proceedings of an assembly which may consist of one or more connected meetings. (1.I.1.1; 1.II.4.1; 1.III.4.1; 1.IV.4.1) ~~In the section on Union Churches (1.I.7), this term is used to describe the Presbyterian equivalent of the consistory.~~

The commission approved the following new entries:

agent. A person or group that has been empowered to act on behalf of an assembly. Agents of General Synod have been given responsibility to endorse a minister as qualified to serve as a specialized transition minister, to supervise the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process of a candidate for ministry, and to implement decisions, policies, and programs of the General Synod. (1.II.7.6, 1.II.11.3, 3.I.3.6b)

enrolled. A designation given to certain persons as members of a group granting them certain rights and privileges. Applicants are enrolled as Candidates for Ministry after examination and approval by the classis. (1.II.11; 1.II.12) RCA ministers are enrolled in the classis by signing the Declaration for Ministers of Word and Sacrament. (1.II.15.4b) Ministers from other denominations are enrolled when installed in an RCA church or upon request and with the approval of classis when serving within the classis. (1.I.2.4; 1.II.15.15)

officially related. Any agency, board, or institution with an enabling document approved by the General Synod and whose governing boards include at least three members who are designated by the General Synod. (1.IV.7.3; 1.IV.7.5)

policy. A governing principle, plan, or course of action. The General Synod alone shall determine denominational policy. (1.IV.2.4)

regulation. A rule or directive approved by the General Synod to put into effect any and all articles of the Government, the Disciplinary Procedures, the Formularies, and the Liturgy of the Reformed Church in America. (Rules and Amendments, Sec. 1)

Editorial Changes to the *Book of Church Order*

During the ordinary course of its work, the commission occasionally identifies stylistic, non-substantive matters for correction in the *BCO*. The commission annually reports any such findings to the General Synod and then communicates the changes to communication and production staff to be reflected in the next edition of the *BCO*. This year, the commission agreed upon the following editorial revisions:

1. *Including our Canadian churches.* There are ten instances of the word “state” used in its geopolitical or territorial sense; however, nine of them do not include a reference to “province” or “provincial” and the one that does incorrectly uses the conjunction “and.” The commission agreed to expand the word “state” to “state or province” in Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 13 (2021 edition, p. 17); Chapter 1, Part I, Article 7, Section 2l (2021 edition, p. 25); twice in Chapter 1, Part I, Article 7, Section 2m (2021 edition, p. 25); Chapter 1, Part II, Article 8, Section 2 (2021 edition, p. 37); Chapter 1, Part II, Article

9, Section 4 (2021 edition, p. 41); and Chapter 1, Part II, Article 10, Section 1 (2021 edition, p. 42). The commission agreed to expand the word “state” to “state or provincial” in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 6, Section 1 (2021 edition, p. 34) and Chapter 1, Part III, Article 6, Section 1 (2021 edition, p. 67). Finally, in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 17, Section 4a.4 (2021 edition, p. 62), the commission agreed to change “state and provincial law” to “state or provincial law”.

2. *References to the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency.* The acronym “MFCA” is used in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 2c (2021 edition, p. 49); in all other places the agency is referred to by its full name. The commission agreed to replace the term “MFCA” with the agency’s full name in Section 2c. The commission also noted that the agency is identified by its full name followed by “(MFCA)” in Chapter 3, Part I, Article 9, Section 5 (2021 edition, p. 124), and agreed to delete the parenthetical abbreviation since the acronym is no longer used anywhere else in the *BCO*.
3. *Email as a reasonable method of communication.* As noted in the commission’s review of deadlines for the submission of overtures, email is a commonly accepted standard of communication. The commission agreed to amend Note 10 (2021 edition, p. 100) of the non-constitutional Explanatory Notes on Chapter 2: The Disciplinary and Judicial Procedures to read as follows: “Provide” means reasonable efforts to deliver, such as hand delivery, certified mail, or email.
4. *Session as a governing body.* The word “session” is used to describe the Presbyterian equivalent of consistory nine times in the Plan of Union for union churches in Chapter 1, Part I, Article 7, Section 2 (2021 edition, pp. 23-26). However, the term is too limiting, as union churches may be formed with churches from Reformed denominations that use other terminology to describe a church’s governing body (e.g., council). Therefore, the commission agreed to replace each instance of “(session)” with “or governing body” in Section 2: one occurrence each in Sections 2e, 2f, and 2v; twice each in Sections 2g, 2o, and 2q.
5. *Session should be meeting.* The commission agreed to correct the use of “session” to “meeting” in Chapter 3, Part I, Article 8, Section 1 (2021 edition, p. 123) and Chapter 3, Part II, Article 2, Section 8 (2021 edition, p. 130).
6. *Meeting should be session.* The commission agreed to correct the use of “meeting” to “session” (in either its singular or plural form) twice in Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 19 (2021 edition, p. 19); once in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 10, Section 4d (2021 edition, p. 44); twice in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 15, Section 10 (2021 edition, p. 57); twice in Chapter 1, Part III, Article 4, Section 2 (2021 edition, p. 66); twice in Chapter 2, Part II, Article 2, Section 6 (2021 edition, p. 93); twice in Chapter 2, Part III, Article 2, Section 7 (2021 edition, p. 97); and once in Chapter 3, Part I, Article 11 (2021 edition, p. 126). There is also one correction in Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 5, Section 3 (2021 edition, p. 72), though this occurrence will be further revised for consistency: “General Synod meeting” will become “session of General Synod.”
7. *Consistent prepositional phrasing for sessions of an assembly.* For consistency of usage within the *BCO*, the commission agreed to change “classis sessions” to “sessions of classis” (in either singular or plural usage) in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 4, Section 1 (2021

edition, p. 33); Chapter 1, Part II, Article 5, Section 1 (2021 edition, p. 33); and Chapter 1, Part II, Article 17, Section 3b (2021 edition, p. 61). The commission agreed to change “regional synod sessions” to “sessions of regional synod” in Chapter 1, Part III, Article 4, Section 1 (2021 edition, p. 66). Finally, the commission agreed to two changes in Chapter 1, Part III, Article 5 (2021 edition, p. 67): changing “the synod’s annual meeting” to “a stated session of the synod” in Section 2 and changing “the annual meeting of the synod” to “a stated session of the synod” in Section 3.

8. *Consistently using “stated” rather than a variety of its synonyms.* Where appropriate, the commission agreed to change “regular” to “stated” for consistency when referring to an assembly’s periodic business meeting prescribed by its bylaws. There are 11 such instances: Chapter 1, Part II, Article 10, Section 4d (2021 edition, p. 44); Chapter 1, Part II, Article 13, Section 5 (2021 edition, p. 52); Chapter 1, Part II, Article 15, Section 10 (2021 edition, p. 57); Chapter 1, Part II, Article 17, Section 3b (2021 edition, p. 61); Chapter 1, Part III, Article 2, Section 3 (2021 edition, p. 65); Chapter 1, Part III, Article 2, Section 4 (2021 edition, pp. 65-66); Chapter 1, Part III, Article 5, Section 2 (2021 edition, p. 67); Chapter 2, Part I, Article 3, Section 5c (2021 edition, p. 83); Chapter 2, Part II, Article 2, Section 4 (2021 edition, p. 92); Chapter 2, Part III, Article 2, Section 4 (2021 edition, p. 96); and Chapter 3, Part I, Article 4, Section 3 (2021 edition, p. 112). In two instances related to the General Synod, the commission agreed to change “annual” to “stated” for consistency, which has the added benefit of future proofing the two occurrences should the General Synod ever decide to meet on a frequency other than annually: Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 5, Section 1 (2021 edition, p. 72) and Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 5, Section 2 (2021 edition, p. 72).
9. *Grammatically simplifying special quorum requirements.* Where a special quorum requirement is designated, the commission agreed to clarify sentence structure and make all four occurrences consistently read: “where a quorum that meets the requirements for a stated session of classis is present.” This change affects Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 4 (2021 edition, p. 40); Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 6 (2021 edition, p. 41); Chapter 1, Part III, Article 2, Section 3 (2021 edition, p. 65); and Chapter 1, Part III, Article 2, Section 4 (2021 edition, pp. 65-66).
10. *Remove grammatically redundant and unnecessary occurrences.* The commission agreed to change “stated session or special session” to “stated or special session” in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 4 (2021 edition, p. 40) and Chapter 1, Part II, Article 9, Section 6 (2021 edition, p. 41). The commission agreed to delete the redundant “regular or” from “regular or stated session” in Chapter 2, Part I, Article 5, Section 11c (2021 edition, p. 87). The commission agreed to delete the unnecessary definite article “the” in Chapter 1, Part III, Article 5, Section 1 (2021 edition, p. 67) so that “at the sessions of the regional synod” now will read “at sessions of the regional synod.”

Elections and Appointments

The commission elected Joshua Scheid to serve as its corresponding delegate to the 2022 General Synod and elected Joshua Scheid to serve as both its moderator and secretary for the annual term beginning July 1, 2022.

Giving Thanks

The commission is deeply grateful for Paul Karssen, staff to the commission, for his invaluable guidance and support. The commission also sincerely appreciates Angela Worthley for her assistance in navigating the commission's transition from its old private page to Google Drive and Maria Orr (and RCA communication and production staff) for her diligent and detailed work updating the published version of the *BCO* each year.

Respectfully submitted,
Joshua Scheid, moderator