

Developments in the Reformed Church in America, #1

The Reformed Church in America (RCA) has never been without disagreement. It could be said that it started with a disagreement in 1628 in New Amsterdam. Another argument created the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) when many disagreed with several issues within the RCA. The current disagreements and what to do about them have come as a bit of a surprise. It seems this could be a breaking point. Last year the interim General Secretary (the top staff position of the General Synod) proposed finding a decisive way forward over the disagreement around human sexuality. He recommended the Synod form a committee that would propose to the RCA what to do. The Synod agreed and established a group called the '2020 Vision Team' to study three options proposed by the secretary. This past June the Synod heard a report about their progress. Their final recommendation will be presented at the General Synod meeting next year.

What is the Issue?

The presenting issue is human sexuality. *How do we understand it? How does it matter to God and being human? How does it fit into salvation in Christ?* Past General Synods have made various decisions and positions that express a traditional view of sexuality and marriage. But some disagree and advocate for full-inclusion in the church and RCA, which for the sake of simplicity mostly has to do with marriage and ordination. Can we continue with multiple views about this? Or does it prevent us from working together and receiving each other in the name of Christ? Does this break the unity of Christ we profess?

The Options (so far)

The three options being considered focus on our polity, that is: how we configure ourselves when churches come together with other churches and assemblies. No theology, standards or ethics changes are being considered.

- 1) Do Nothing with slight changes to help us work together. This is essentially the agree-to-disagree option and figure out how to not let the issues get in the way.
- 2) Reorganization. This would essentially reconfigure the churches and classes into like-minded groups. This would remove much of the presbyterian (reformed) system of the higher assemblies (like classis, and regional synods). Then through these new assemblies somehow form the General Synod.
- 3) Grace-Filled Separation. For those that could not live with the decision, whatever the decision is, it would allow churches and classes to leave with money and buildings, whichever side the issue they are on.

You can read summaries and the full report of the 2020 Vision Team here: <https://www.rca.org/vision-2020-team>.

I am planning on giving more information and my views about the issues involved and potential outcomes. The Consistory would like to hold gatherings to ask questions and talk together. There will also likely be regional and Classis meetings. So I invite you to prayerfully think through the issues. These are not easy things to navigate, but with the Holy Spirit's help we can do this in a way that honors God and others while being faithful to Christ.

- Pastor Jeff