

The Human Sexuality Report
Rev. Dr. Mary S. Hulst
pastormary@calvn.edu
The Human Sexuality Report

A brief history

1970 – Canada decriminalizes homosexuality; Synod appoints study committee to articulate the church's position on same-sex attraction
1973 Report said that being same-sex attracted is not sinful, but that same-sex sexual intimacy is; calls church to care well for same-sex attracted members
4 later study committees still agree, and also call the church to care for those with same-sex attraction (and repent for not doing it well)
Same-sex marriage legalized (2005 Canada; 2015 US)
Study committee appointed in 2013, reports in 2016.
Synod 2016 appoints new committee to provide "clear ethical guidance for what constitutes a holy and healthy Christian sexual life."

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Terms to know:

Orientation: the awareness that I am attracted to people of the same (homosexual) or opposite sex (heterosexual)

Behavior: acting on feelings of attraction e.g., physical intimacy, courtship, marriage
The term "gay" means someone who is attracted to people of the same-sex. Orientation is not sinful. ***So you can be gay (same-sex attracted) and Christian.***

CRCNA Acts of Synod 1973; 2002; 2013; 2016

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Terms related to sexuality/sexual attraction:

L = Lesbian : a woman who is sexually attracted to other women, though nonbinary folks may identify as lesbians too

G = Gay: typically used to describe a man who is attracted to other men, but can also be used to describe anyone who is attracted to the same gender; nonbinary people may consider themselves gay

B = Bisexual: person attracted to either sex

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Terms Related to Gender Identity:

T = Transgender: a person whose gender identity does not align with the gender assigned at birth; experiences gender dysphoria; may transition in appearance, take hormones, have surgery

Q = Queer: an umbrella term used to describe someone in the LGBTQ+ community (use with discretion)

“+” = People who do not easily identify in one of the above categories, such as...

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Terms Related to Gender Identity:

- **Non-binary:** person who does not identify as either male or female, may use “they/them” pronouns
- **Intersex:** someone born with differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy
- **Asexual:** someone who does not feel strong sexual attraction to anyone
- **Genderfluid; Genderqueer; Agender**

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The Report: “Study Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation–Laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality” (HSR)

Appointed in 2016; 5 years + 1 = 2022

Includes sections on porn, polyamory, gender identity, premarital sex and cohabitation, homosexuality, singleness, and divorce.

Note: NOTHING has been decided; these are recommendations to Synod

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The Report

Advises that churches be clear in teaching that homosexual acts are sinful:

"This survey of relevant biblical texts has shown that Scripture teaches in a clear, consistent, and compelling way that *homosexual acts of any kind are sinful and not in agreement with God's will for his covenant people*. The debate about same-sex sex, therefore, is not a situation in which there are two equal and opposing interpretations of the biblical evidence..." con't (p.112,113, italics mine)

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The Report

Advises that churches be clear in teaching that homosexual acts are sinful, con't:

"Although a variety of revisionist arguments have been made, none of them are convincing but, rather, ought to be justly judged as 'strained and unhistorical' and evidence of the 'extraordinary maneuvers' involved in the attempt to reread Scripture. (p.112,113, italics mine)

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The Report: Advises that the church tell trans people to be reconciled to their created selves:

"As Christians, we believe that the body is a gift from God. Tragically, due to the fall, through no fault of their own, some people experience a disconnect between their gender identity and their sex. Nevertheless, there is no redemption in embracing this disconnect as a sign of God's good intent. There is no redemption in trying to live as a male when God has given one the body of a female, or in trying to live as a female when God has given one the body of a male. We do not help people to flourish when we encourage them to transition from one sex to another. To transition is merely to intensify the problem. No matter how hard a person tries, or regardless of what invasive procedures they undergo, they cannot change the fact that God has made them male or female." p. 81

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The Report

Advises that the church tell trans people to be reconciled to their created selves, cont:

"To receive God's love for their bodies and to be able to love their own bodies, transgendered believers need protection from the evil one's deception that God made a mistake when creating them. Therefore, those who are transgendered or are experiencing gender dysphoria should be encouraged to be reconciled to their created self." p. 84

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The Report:

Says churches can decide whether or not to use people's preferred pronouns:

"Decide what welcome and hospitality look like in regard to people's names and pronouns. A recent study showed that 'transgender and nonbinary youth [ages 13-24] who report having

their pro-nouns respected by all or most of the people in their lives attempted suicide at half the rate of those who did not have their pronouns respected.'

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The Report:

Says churches can decide whether or not to use people's preferred pronouns, con't:
"Reflect on Paul's decision in 1Corinthians 9:22 in reference to people's identity and pronouns: 'I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.' Some congregations will decide that to be inclusive means that their community will refer to transgendered people with the names and pronouns they prefer. Other congregations may choose not to do that but should strive to avoid giving offense as much as possible." p.86

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The Report

Says that unrepentant participation in these sins (porn, polyamory, premarital sex and cohabitation, homosexual sex) is a matter of salvation:

"... *these sins threaten a person's salvation*. The Scriptures call the church to warn people to flee sexual immorality for the sake of their souls and to encourage them with God's presence and power to equip them for holy living. A church that fails to call people to repentance and offer them the hope of God's loving deliverance is acting like a false church." (p.146, italics mine)

Says that teaching rightly on these issues has confessional status.

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What's next?

All overtures regarding the report and the report itself will be referred to an Advisory Committee at Synod. That committee will decide what to bring to the floor of Synod.

Possibilities:

Majority/Minority Reports that recommend different things

Different parts of the report are accepted/denied

Defer all or some decisions for another year

Defer all or some conversations to another committee

?

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What could this mean for local congregations?

Elders, Deacons and Pastors agree to the Covenant for Officebearers, which includes affirming the confessions:

“We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.”

--The Covenant for Officebearers

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What could this mean for local congregations?

We require our Elders, Deacons and Pastors to agree to the Covenant for Officebearers, which includes affirming the confessions.

By signing, have office holders already agreed to teach in accordance with the church’s interpretation of the confessions, including about human sexuality?

Could office holders rescind their signatures to the Covenant for Officebearers?

Could each office bearers who objects file a Gravamen (an official statement opposing a specific teaching)?

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What could this mean for local congregations?

A few congregations have already voted to become affirming

Those churches could choose to disaffiliate from the denomination

Note: each congregation is bound by its articles of incorporation in regard to if they can take the property or if the property remains in the CRC

Those churches could join an existing denomination (e.g. PCUSA), or form a new affiliation or denomination

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What can we do?

Pray. Seriously.

Follow *The Banner* or #CRCSynod on social media June 10-16.

Teach others about the polity issues involved.

Understand that this will not be resolved this summer.

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What can we do, con't?

Learn who your representatives to Synod will be.

For APCRC -> Classis GR South

Pastors Mike Hoozeboom (La Grave) and Josh Van Drunen (First Cutlerville)

Elder Don Decker; Deacon Scott Hekstra

Pray for them.

Email them and tell them that you are praying for them.

Offer to meet with them to listen to how they are preparing for this conversation, and so that they can listen to you. (In person, Teams, FaceTime)

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Q&A

Rev. Dr. Mary S. Hulst (Pastor Mary)

@PastorMary2U

pastormary@calvin.edu