

The *Hesed* Project

Wise Words from Church Members – Harm

Introduction

Hesed Project CRC has been in contact with leaders and members of various Christian Reformed Churches who are preparing letters, gravamina, and overtures to express their concerns about some of the decisions made by Synod 2022 with regard to human sexuality. We respect that each gravamen or letter is a personal and pastoral matter between an office bearer or member and their church council. They contain words of wisdom that are useful for others; sharing common themes, without identifying information and with permission, is consistent with one of Synod's decisions, which called for continued research and dialogue. Synod then went on to contradict the focus on dialogue by creating conditions of fear, exclusion, and punishment. The Hesed Project CRC will continue to promote open discussion and continuous learning. That's what Hesed – God's gracious and steadfast lovingkindness – looks like in our world.

The wise words are organized into six different themes. The wise words are organized into six different themes. This document explores the harm caused by Synod's decisions, but the full document, with all six themes, is available [here](#).

1. Chastity and Heidelberg Catechism Question & Answer 108
2. Interpretation of Scripture
 - Covenant, Belonging, and Unconditional Love
 - Image-bearing, Moral Agency, and Conscience
 - Creation Order and Creation Norms
3. **Harm**
4. Justice: An essential, missing piece
5. Local Church as Locus for Pastoral Care
6. Unity and How We Make Decisions

Interested in engaging with other church leaders on any of these topics or with other questions you may have? Send us a confidential email and let us know what avenues you're exploring or the assistance you may need. The Hesed Project CRC is happy to help. [Email us](#).



Harm

The most passionate elements of letters and gravamina call out the harm being done. Most of these are based on real-life experiences. We cannot share these for privacy reasons; but their existence reinforces the importance of more genuine listening than occurred before Synod 2022.

- Real people are being harmed by Synod 2022’s interpretation of scripture and the Heidelberg Catechism. The damage done by the church to those who identify as LGBTQ+ is well documented: depression, suicide, leaving the church and the Christian faith entirely. This “fruit” of our continuing approach must not be ignored. This reason is highlighted by many writing gravamina or letters of dissent.
- Responders include people who are LGBTQ+. They express how they have been deeply hurt by the church, and are harmed again and deeper by this decision. The Synod decision confirms their experiences of rejection and condemnation rather than conveying love; it adds to previous harm rather than a change in direction that should accompany a lament.
- The harm being done leaves the expressions of lament sounding hollow. Rather than learning from sinful shortcoming, Synod’s decision appears to double down on our painful history. Rather than healing, it creates conditions that make it impossible to undo the damage done by the church in the lives of members, children, and neighbors.

