

The *Hesed* Project

Wise Words from Church Members – Justice An Essential Missing Piece

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 Justice, an essential piece missing from 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](#).



Justice: An essential, missing piece

Justice is a central theme of Scripture missing at Synod 2022. It is now a reason why some cannot, in good conscience, comply with some parts of the decision.

- Passages in which God condemns practices that are unjust require more attention. These include Jesus' way of showing that justice is an essential element of love. Welcome, belonging, and non-discrimination are essential elements for just relations with LGBTQ+ persons in our community.
- Equating unfaithful sexual relationships and faithful same-sex relationships in the same category is a serious injustice. Assuming that all same-sex relationships fall under the category of "licentiousness" is an injustice to members who live in committed, God-honouring relationships. Persons living in same-sex marriages within our community are seeking to "worship God alone" and engage in faithful – not licentious – relationships. Failure to make those distinctions is unjust treatment.
- Requiring a selectively enforced celibacy on a minority group who are equally committed to faithful marriage relationships as others in a congregation is a discriminatory practice that is not adequately justified. The Synod decision functions as an exclusionary boundary, whether intended or not. It contradicts the early prayers of lament in the Human Sexuality Report and the report's stated recognition of failures in the way such persons have been treated in the past. Just relations are an essential element of Biblical love.
- Another case of equating faithful and unfaithful relationships occurs in relation to premarital sex. Defining premarital as before legal affirmation of a marriage fails to consider that there may be faithful marriage relationships without a legal certificate of marriage. In Canada, and particularly in Quebec, many marriage relationships are common-law marriages, which have all the responsibilities and privileges of marriages without a legal certificate. Lumping them with infidelity or one-night stands not only shows a lack of careful attention to massive changes in cultural understandings of marriage from Biblical times. It is not just, and it does a disservice for ministry to persons in various relationships.
- Justifying Synod's decision by appeal to the majority of the global Christian church without any consideration of significant minorities within the global church lacks concern for just treatment of minority voices, something for which Jesus gave high priority. It also violates the Belhar Confession, which adds to our heritage on the meaning of love of neighbor, an essential belief that receives less attention in earlier confessions. The Belhar Confession was totally ignored by Synod 2022. Although it has a different status than the Heidelberg Catechism, previous Synods committed to take it seriously in future deliberations. It came to us from the African church community with relevant experience of the harms done when the Bible is misinterpreted to permit unjust treatment of others.

