

The *Hesed* Project

Wise Words from Church Members – Pastoral Care

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 Pastoral Care, 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](#).



Local Church as Locus for Pastoral Care

Some responses to Synod 2022 express concern about erosion of respect for the role of the local church as the locus for pastoral care.

- While Synod 2022 claimed to give top priority to pastoral care, the effect of its decisions is to undermine it. It also removed pastoral care from the domain of the local church, which is an important feature of Reformed polity. It did this in spite of the powerful testimony of one church, Neland Avenue CRC, about its long, prayerful process to discern God's guidance together.
- Synod's decision ties the hands of ministers and congregations trying to show love and grace amid complex individual circumstances and deep pain. It creates conditions that leave local church leaders open to legitimate charges of hypocrisy, being un-Christ-like, or acting like a false church.

