

MINUTES OF THE 2019 STATED MEETING

of

# AUGUSTINE PRESBYTERY



COMMUNION OF REFORMED  
EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Lancaster, PA  
October 4, 2019

**October 4, 2019 Lancaster, PA**  
**2019 Augustine Presbytery of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches**

- I. Covenant Renewal Worship (8:30-9:00 a.m.) - Presiding Minister Gregg Strawbridge (hereafter, PM) of Augustine Presbytery led, assisted by PM pro tempore Laurence Windham.
- II. Call to Order by PM Gregg Strawbridge
  - A. Roll Call of Member Churches and Delegates
    1. All Saints Church, Lancaster, PA – Kevin Kanoff
    2. Christ Church, Raleigh, NC – Duane Garner
    3. Christ Church, Morgantown, WV – Bill Oldland
    4. Christ Covenant, Copiaque, NY (not present)
    5. Christ Covenant Church, Shippensburg, PA – Ray Barbeito
    6. Christ Reformed, Oakland, ME (not present)
    7. Christ Reformed Evangelical Church, Annapolis, MD – CJ Bowen
    8. Covenant Heritage Reformed Church, Newport News, VA – Conrad Doskey
    9. Holy Trinity Church, Concord, NC — (not present)
    10. King’s Chapel, Brooklyn, NY — Troy Greene
    11. Oakwood Bible Church, Troy, NY – Jim Dujack
    12. Providence Church, Lynchburg, VA – Virgil Hurt, Rick Davis
    13. Saint Peter Presbyterian Church, Abingdon, VA & Bristol, TN – Steve Murphy, Laurence Windham
    14. Tri-City Covenant Church, Somersworth, NH – Paul Edgar, Harold Guptill
  - B. PM Strawbridge determined a quorum as 11 or more member churches were represented.
  - C. Candidate\* and Mission Churches<sup>1</sup> were acknowledged:
    1. All Souls Church, Green Camp, OH\* —Rhett Crabtree, Bart Hooper
    2. Christ the King Church, Belfast ME\* (not present)
    3. Communion Fellowship Church, Bristol, VA (not present)
    4. Sovereign Christ Church, Mansfield, OH\* — Clint Zeigler, Kyle Robbins
    5. Trinity Reformed Church, Martinsburg, WV — Jonathan Dorminy, Peter Anselmo, and deacon, Lucas Dorminy
  - D. Presbytery Recognition of Guests and Visiting Delegations:
    1. Rev. Stuart Bryan, PM of Knox Presbytery
    2. Rev. Jared McNabb, St Paul Church, Miller, MD
    3. Rev. Michael Jones and Rev. Ralph Regal, Christ Church, Ithaca, NY
    4. Rev. Brian Nolder, from TriCity Covenant Church, Somersworth, NH

---

<sup>1</sup> The usage here designates a “Candidate Church” as a previously existing congregation (from outside) seeking membership in the CREC. A “Mission Church” is under the authority of a member CREC church, usually planted by that CREC “Mother” church.

### III. Church Reports:

- A. Verbal reports were presented with prayer for each member congregation.
- B. Verbal reports were presented with prayer for each candidate congregation.
- C. At the request of PM of Council Virgil Hurt, the churches present reported on the number of members in each: there were over 346 households and 1441 individual members counted in the congregations of Augustine Presbytery represented at this meeting. It was noted there are also a few other congregations not represented, nor counted.

### IV. Augustine Presbytery Examination Committees (2019):

- A. See the April 2019 Augustine (ad hoc meeting) minutes for the committee actions with Chris Boland (approved for ordination for Christ Reformed, Oakland, ME). The chair of this committee was Laurence Windham.
- B. Duane Garner (chair) reported on Harold Guptill: It was noted that before his presentation to presbytery, Harold had been ordained by Tri-City Covenant Church, and has been serving them for more than four years as a bi-vocational pastor. He did not sit for a presbytery exam before his ordination. In order to rectify this, the session of Tri-City Covenant Church asked Augustine Presbytery to take Harold under care for training and to examine him with a view to his fitness for the ministry. Since May of 2015, Harold has been studying the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions with members of Augustine Presbytery. He has earned a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies from Grand Canyon University, applying himself faithfully to his studies. Harold has completed the written examination for ministerial candidates prescribed by our Book of Procedures, and has been examined by the committee individually and collectively. The examination committee affirms Harold's ministry to the saints at Tri-City Covenant Church, and has issued a written report to his session with recommendations for continued studies.

### V. Presbytery Membership

- A. Motions for new member churches:
  - 1. Christ Church, Morgantown, WV (Bill Oldland) moved (Duane Garner, second) to receive All Souls Church, Green Camp, OH, into full membership. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 01.
  - 2. Oakwood Bible Church, Troy, NY, (Jim Dujack) moved (Ray Barbeito, second) moved to receive Sovereign Christ Church, Mansfield, OH, into full membership. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 02.
  - 3. Christ Covenant Church, Shippensburg, PA, (Ray Barbeito) moved (CJ Bowen, second) moved to receive Trinity Reformed Church, Martinsburg, WV, into full membership. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 03.
- B. Vows were administered to the delegates of these congregations and they were seated.

VI. Presbytery Reports, Committees, Overtures, and Reviews

- A. Presbytery received the PM of Augustine report (Gregg Strawbridge) and he requested ratification of appointing two ordination committees. Duane Garner moved (Virgil Hurt, second) moved to ratify these actions. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 04.
- B. Presbytery received a report about the "Generation Next Christian Student Camp" organized by families from Christ Church, Raleigh, NC which serves our churches in the Augustine Presbytery.
- C. Presbytery received a report from the Augustine Presbytery (2018) Missions Committee from Steve Murphy. Duane Garner moved (Paul Edgar, second) to authorize this committee to continue through 2019. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 05.
- D. Presbytery received a report from the Baptism of Foster Children Committee from CJ Bowen and a written position paper (appended to these minutes). Presbytery discussed the terms "adopting" versus "receiving." According to our BOP (BOP II), "When the assembly wishes to approve and endorse assembly minutes or the factual findings or opinions of a committee as set forth in a report, or when the assembly wishes to implement the recommendations or resolutions of a committee as set forth in a report, the proper motion is to 'adopt' the minutes or specified portion(s) of the report." The committee moved that Augustine Presbytery "adopt" this paper. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 06. Laurence Windham moved (Steve Murphy, second) to authorize the committee to work with Augustine delegates to the CREC Council (2020) to perfect the wording of the position paper. The committee moved that Augustine Presbytery "adopt" this paper. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 07.
- E. Presbytery received a report from the Augustine Church Planting Network from Virgil Hurt, indicating that about \$27,000 is available for funding, requesting members to serve on the committee. This is a standing committee under the oversight of Providence Church, Lynchburg.
- F. Grant Van Brimmer (Sgt in the US Army; intern with Troy Green) was introduced as a potential church planter with an opportunity to plant a CREC church in Canada next year. Grant and his family are members of the King's Chapel, Brooklyn, NY.
- G. Christ Church (Cary, NC) presented a proposal to separate the Triennial Council meetings from presbytery meetings. Duane Garner moved (Conrad Doskey, second) the specific proposal (appended to these minutes). The motion carried with opposition (not counted or recorded): 2019/10/4: 08.
- H. Presbytery reviewed and approved a list of the ordained ministers recognized within the churches of the Augustine Presbytery (appended to these minutes).

- I. The Wycliffe Presbytery proposal on the compensation for Presiding Minister of Council in the CREC (hereafter, PMoC) was received as information and discussed.
- J. Presbytery received the Knox Presbytery proposal to revise the CREC Memorial on Abortion. It was noted that this document was received in a first reading in 2017 (at Council). This revision presented was received as information and discussed.
- K. Presbytery received a document from members within Knox Presbytery on “Subordination within the Trinity,” whose chief author was Douglas Wilson. This was received as information.

#### VII. CREC Council and PMoC Reports

- A. Presbytery received PMoC Virgil Hurt’s report. CJ Bowen moved (Laurence Windham, second) to ratify the items presented as actions in PMoC Hurt’s report. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 09.
- B. Presbytery discussed PMoC Hurt’s proposals for consideration for the 2020 Council. PMoC Hurt noted that none of these are in the final form and welcomes revision. The main ideas of these suggestions are:
  - 1. Addressing churches that fail to send delegates to presbytery with some form of reproof.
  - 2. Requiring churches to have two local, member elders for churches to become full members and if churches have only one local elder, suspending voting rights.
  - 3. Addressing PM compensation and expenses, calling for a kind of salary for each PM, as well as specifying how these financial obligations may be met by member churches.
- C. Reports from CREC Council Committees (of 2017) were received:
  - 1. Amendment on Same-Sex Marriage.
  - 2. Social Media
  - 3. Terrorism & Just War
- D. The CREC Council Committee on Ordination Procedures moved the approval of the principles/procedures (which are as follows). The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 10.
  - 1. Local congregation elders/session must approve a ministerial/pastoral candidate (Titus 1, 1 Tim. 3).
  - 2. Presbyteries help local churches in the ordination process by overseeing the examination of the candidate’s ministerial competencies, e.g.,
  - 3. A written qualifying examination (“closed book”), rather than the current open book (after committee examination).

4. A committee (five elders, majority of which are pastors) conducts private examinations, as well as evaluating other written work and after approved sits for a floor examination at presbytery.
5. After a presbytery examination, the approved candidate may be examined at any CREC presbytery (in which he is called), but this exam must be limited to his "views," rather than a repeat of his complete ordination examination.
6. Though approved after an exam, he may not be ordained without a specific "call" under the authority of a local session of elders.
7. Vows must be taken by any man accepting a call to a congregation (specific vows to be proposed).
8. Ordination vows may be administered in the local church or administered by a presbytery, acting on behalf of the local church. Ordination vows may only be taken at the presbytery event (1 Tim. 4:14) if the local church making the "call" permits.

#### VIII. New Business Proposed

- A. Laurence Windham moved (Harold Guptill, second) that PM Strawbridge form a "Women's Role Committee" to address the role(s) of women in the Church in light of the biblical view of their exclusion from the office of elder. The committee is to present findings at the 2020 presbytery. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 11. Laurence Windham, Rick Davis, Troy Greene volunteered to serve.
- B. Rick Davis moved (Kevin Kanoff, second) that PM Strawbridge form a "Membership Practices Committee" to address process and procedures for transitioning underage (household) members to adult members (e.g., the committee should address whether baptized 18-25 year-old members of believing households should take vows at a certain age to become individual members, even if they have not yet formed their own household). This committee is to present findings and recommendations at the 2020 presbytery. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 12. David Cooper, Kevin Kanoff, Paul Edgar volunteered to serve.
- C. Jim DuJack moved (Virgil Hurt, second) moved that Christ Church, Ithaca, NY (affiliated with the Federation of Reformed Churches, FORC) be received as a candidate church. The motion carried unanimously: 2019/10/4: 13.
- D. Presbytery commended Michelle Suereth, Administrative Assistant at All Saints, Lancaster, PA for her excellent work, planning, and executing of the events of the 2019 Augustine Presbytery meeting.
- E. Motion to adjourn was made without objection by Conrad Doskey (Harold Guptill, second).
- F. PMoC Virgil Hurt led our closing prayer.

APPENDICES:

VI. D. Foster Baptism Position Paper

VI. F. Christ Church Cary Proposal to Separate Triennial Council from Presbytery Meetings

AP Augustine PM list of ordained ministers

## **Introduction –**

This Committee was formed to study the issues surrounding the propriety of baptizing foster children, and to provide a position paper to the Presbytery. We have sought to carry this out by refining the question to focus on the matter of the baptism of infant and very young orphans, and by considering this issue from three perspectives: biblical/theological, civil, and historical, wherefore we respectfully present this paper.

The question of baptizing foster children is motivated by the biblical commission to baptize (Matt. 28:18-20) as well as God's heart of compassion for the fatherless (Ex. 22:22; James 1:27). The desire that orphans be brought to God in baptism is fundamentally a good and holy one, but this recognition is not enough to settle the matter. The issue necessitates understanding both the extent and expansion of a biblical household and identifying the proper recipients of baptism. In addition, it raises the question of the appropriate roles of church and state in adjudicating family matters, and it brings up a number of pastoral considerations for those families and children participating in foster care.

### **I. The Biblical Witness –**

After considering many relevant passages of Scripture, the Committee believes the following five texts are essential to properly addressing the issue in question: Gen. 17:10-14, Ex. 12:43-49, Ps. 68:5-6, Acts 2:38-39, and Romans 8:23.

- A. In Genesis 17, the key point that is established is that God's covenant sign is to be given to every male who is either born or bought. The central idea at issue is one of ownership or belonging as the foundation of determining covenant status.
- B. In Exodus 12, the covenant meal is extended to the bought once he is given the covenant sign, but denied to the foreigner, hired worker, sojourner, or stranger, unless they submit to circumcision. This highlights an important distinction between the religious, ceremonial, or festal life of God's people and her sacramental life, which, applied to the household, results in a distinction between household members and covenant members. All manner of guests or strangers were required to observe Israel's laws and invited to her feasts, but they were not to participate in her identifying covenant markers unless they were willing to leave behind their previous status and become a part of the covenant people. To the categories of born and bought, this passage adds those who willfully choose to belong. Proper candidates to enter into the sacramental life of God's people through God's covenant sign are those who have been born, bought, or are willing.



- C. In Psalm 68, we are told that God becomes the father of the fatherless and protector of widows, and that He settles the solitary in a home. God’s care of the fatherless does not leave them in their plight; He rescues them by placing them in a home. This is God’s ultimate mechanism of care for the orphan.
- D. Acts 2 reiterates the covenant promise and connects it to baptism, specifying that the covenant promise symbolized by the sign of baptism is for those who repent and believe, as well as their children, and all who are far off but are called by God. If this call can rightly be understood as the effectual call that renews the will, then we see in a New Covenant context the categories of being born into the covenant and willingly choosing to join the covenant people.
- E. Romans 8:23 ties together God’s care for the orphan in Psalm 68 and the category of being “bought” when it describes adoption as the redemption (buying back) of our bodies. Those who are not sons become sons through the redemptive transaction of adoption.<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:23 is addressing theological concerns, but using language drawn from the sociology of Israel that enables us to make application to the present issue. This passage also raises the deeply pastoral category of “groaning” as the response of those who have been given the firstfruits of the Spirit, but still wait for adoption to be fully realized.

Taken together, these passages present a coherent picture that extends throughout both Old and New Covenants. God cares deeply for the fatherless, and has provided a means by which the solitary may be joined to a household. Broadly considered, a biblical household is not restricted to biological family, but may also include servants, extended family, and foreigners or other guests, all of whom may participate in the general religious and festal life of God’s people (household members). The head of the household maintains a relationship of care to all such household members.

But participation in the sacramental life of the covenant people is restricted to those household members who are joined to the covenant in one of three ways: 1) they have been born into the covenant, 2) they have been bought/redeemed/adopted by a covenant member, or 3) they have willingly joined themselves to the covenant (covenant members).<sup>2</sup> In addition to the relationship of care, the head of the household also has a relationship of authority over and responsibility to such covenant members. The relevant example of this authority being exercised is in the matter of circumcision: a head of household circumcises his sons and his servants (Gen. 17), but not sojourners residing in his household (Ex. 12).

---

<sup>1</sup> The Committee recognizes that while there is considerable overlap, “adoption” in the ancient world does not correspond exactly to “adoption” in our own day, which is why other considerations must be weighed before making “adoption” a *sine qua non* of orphan baptism.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, the NT instances of “household baptism”, eg, Acts 16:15, must be balanced with texts such as 1 Cor. 7:12ff, which acknowledges the possibility of a mixed household.

When reckoning covenant membership, it should be clear that the first category is familiar to all who practice infant baptism, and the third to all who practice believer baptism.<sup>3</sup> It is the middle category that must be evaluated when considering the issue of foster baptism. It is not sufficient for sacramental purposes that a person be presently under the care of a covenant household, e.g., as a sojourner or foreigner; they must themselves be joined to the covenant people, having in some sense been “bought” before they may receive the covenant sign or the covenant meal.

This means that the heart of the question of foster baptism is determining which relationships on the spectrum from foster care to adoption can rightly be seen as redemptive actions by which the young orphan becomes a covenant member of a covenant household. Such a determination cannot be made without understanding how key terms are used to describe issues related to foster care in our own day, and so we turn to these civil considerations.

## **II. Civil Considerations –**

### **A. Definitions**

It is necessary to have in place operating definitions of key terms, especially legal categories, when attempting to apply the Bible’s teaching to the current practice of foster care and adoption. The following definitions will be widely applicable across a number of judicial contexts, but may not be universally applicable due to varying usage in different jurisdictions.<sup>4</sup>

- Adoption
  - Adoption is the means by which an orphan becomes a fully recognized member of a family other than his family of origin.
- Foster Care
  - Foster care is a limited and temporary placement for purposes of care and nurture under the oversight of the civil government.
- Long-Term/Permanent Foster Care; Entrustment for Adoption<sup>5</sup>
  - Contractual agreements that formalize abiding arrangements of care and nurture.

---

<sup>3</sup> The baptism of older children and young adults in foster care who apply for baptism upon profession of faith is not in view in this report.

<sup>4</sup> These definitions are offered in layman’s terms. For more technical definitions, you will need to consult your state or local legal codes.

<sup>5</sup> There is no consistent terminology for such agreements; agreements similar in function to those named here may exist in different jurisdictions and should be evaluated accordingly.

- Kinship Care
  - The care and nurture of children by relatives or close family friends.
- Legal Guardianship/Wardship
  - A legal guardian has the legal authority and duty to care for another person (ward).
- Orphan
  - An orphan is a child whose biological parents have died, abandoned, or deserted their child, or have had their parental rights terminated by the civil magistrate (ie, TPR).<sup>6</sup>
- Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)
  - This judgment of the court is the means by which a child is removed from the authority of their biological parents. In other words, this is how a child with living parents becomes an orphan.
- Ward of the State/ Ward of Court
  - This status applies to minor children who are seen to be under the authority of the civil magistrate, as opposed to the authority of biological or adoptive parents or legal guardians.

## B. Considerations of Status

These definitions present a number of different potential statuses for fatherless children. The Committee agrees that the typical temporary foster care situation, especially when there is still the possibility that the biological parents may be reunited with their child, does not constitute a redemptive covenant relationship. They are temporary guests, even if and when (as often happens) the relationship of care lasts longer than expected.

The Committee affirms that adoption does result in this relationship of covenant membership. Adopted children are full members of their adoptive family, and thus the covenant head of a Christian family has the authority to present them for baptism as covenant members.<sup>7</sup> Once redeemed by adoption, they should be baptized as covenant children or as believers,<sup>8</sup> depending on their ages and the practices and policies of particular Sessions.

---

<sup>6</sup> This differs from biblical usage, where an orphan is one who is fatherless, even if his mother is still living.

<sup>7</sup> This report should not be read as taking a position as to whether covenant membership is confirmed or created by baptism, and thus the term “covenant members” in this context and as appropriate throughout the report may be glossed as “promissory covenant members”.

<sup>8</sup> The baptism of older children and young adults in foster care who apply for baptism upon profession of faith is not in view in this report.

The statuses in question, then, refer to orphans who are under kinship care, long-term foster care, legal guardianship, or other equivalent. Three major considerations that must be taken into account when determining whether such a situation is in effect a redemptive action commensurate to adoption<sup>9</sup> are:

- 1) the legal authority assigned to the caregiver
- 2) the matter of financial support or remuneration<sup>10</sup>
- 3) the grounds for terminating the relationship<sup>11</sup>

As a baseline for making the appropriate determination, the Committee posits the following: if the caregiver does not have legal custody or legal authority to make major decisions on the child's behalf, then the child has not been redeemed by the caregiver. If the caregiver is receiving consistent financial support for the ordinary care of the child, then the child has not been redeemed by the caregiver. If the caregiver or another party such as the civil magistrate or biological relatives may terminate the relationship without a court hearing that establishes proper grounds, then the child has not been redeemed by the caregiver.

It is important to make such determinations on a case by case basis, giving special attention to the particularities of each situation, but if the caregiver does not have legal custody or equivalent authority, has not assumed full financial responsibility, and is not legally bound to all the appropriate responsibilities of care and nurture of an abiding relationship, then the Committee would advise the Session to conclude that the child in question has not been redeemed, and therefore it is not appropriate for a caregiver to present the child for baptism as a covenant member of their household.

A fourth consideration has to do with the question of inheritance. Inheritance represented the most significant aspect of adoption in the biblical world, and Romans 8 bears witness to the connection of these ideas. However, not all those who became members of a covenant household stood to receive an inheritance, slaves being the obvious example. This means that the issue of inheritance should be seen as relevant, but not determinative in the same way as the previous three considerations.

Applying this principle today, there are some cases in which the absence of an inheritance would not indicate a lack of full household membership, and some in which it

---

<sup>9</sup> In using this example, the Committee does not present adoption as the only status that satisfies the considerations presented above; that is the determination that individual Sessions must make. The example is given because adoption presents the clearest example of a status that does satisfy the relevant considerations.

<sup>10</sup> This consideration is analogous to the purchase or redemption price of the OT context – the point of similarity is found in the effect of a significant financial undertaking on the person's status. However, the disanalogy is important: orphans today are not "bought," "purchased," or "owned". This difference is seen in that buying a slave was a means to secure future *labor* from the one bought, whereas in an adoption or similar arrangement a commitment is made to assure future *provision* for the one brought into the household.

<sup>11</sup> The Committee recognizes that this consideration would not necessarily apply to the biblical category of servants, and is presented here for a context where this path to covenant membership is not in view.

would. In cases of adoption or certain instances of kinship care<sup>12</sup>, for child to be excluded from an inheritance would be cause for serious concern, but providing an inheritance to a ward is not a responsibility of a legal guardian. In cases of long-term foster care, the expectation of inheritance or lack thereof may be instructive when determining whether or not the child in question is a member of the household or under the care of the household, though it may not be determinative, especially in those situations where some other provision exists for the child's future welfare.

### C. Jurisdiction

God's people generally are called to care for the fatherless; both church and state are called to fulfill diaconal functions in relation to those instructions, and Christian families are encouraged to open their hearts and homes to the orphan in a variety of ways.

This means that the family, the church, and the state each have an appropriate role in caring for fatherless children. The Scriptures give clear priority for provision, nurture, and discipline to the family, and so ideally, orphans will be placed in families (Psalm 68:6), but it is not clear how they will get there, who will administrate, who is in charge until that happens, or who and what determines the child's status in relation to the caregiving family.

In particular, it is not clear from Scripture that the parental role is to be taken up by either church or state in the absence of biological parents. Christians have not determined that there is one correct relationship between church and state on a number of issues, not only this one. Different understandings exist, and while this leaves much to be debated, where there is an absence of clarity, there must be an abundance of charity.

Claims by church, state, or temporary caregivers to the parental role in general or to any parental function in particular should be mutually checked and balanced, and should always be understood as temporary and situational, not inherent or normative. Neither church nor state nor temporary caregivers own a child; they are stewards and guardians with important but limited responsibilities and authority. Ideally, both church and state would serve as witnesses to a family's adoption/guardianship as they ought to do with marriage, recognizing a separate institution that they both regulate but do not rule over.

This means that simply appealing to the authority of either church or state is insufficient to answer the question of the propriety of orphan baptism. The general posture for a Christian should be submission to the authority of civil government and the local church. This does not preclude petitioning or making use of the appropriate means of appeal, but it does mean that Christian should not allow this issue to bring about division in the church, or to lead them rashly into acts of civil disobedience.

---

<sup>12</sup> The general equity of the OT levirate ought to inform Christian participation in kinship care, in addition to whatever legal requirements may pertain.

If the state's requirements for adoption/guardianship are seen as burdensome, and if the church's actions are seen as insufficient, or vice versa, then these circumstances are to be borne with groaning and cries to God for justice and redemption, as Romans 8 instructs us, while working and waiting for change as appropriate.

Because of the complexity and variety of circumstances and situations, a simple answer to the question before the Committee is unwise. Therefore, the Committee offers these factors as considerations, matters for Sessions to weigh and evaluate with patience, charity, pastoral wisdom, and constant reference to Scripture and in dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit. An important part of this process is to consider the wisdom of others, both past and present, and so the resources in the next section have been consulted by the Committee and are commended to the churches of Augustine Presbytery.

### III. Historical Background –

The Committee's research turned up relatively few resources that dealt with this question in a meaningful and relevant way, but found the following to be instructive.

1. In one of his letters to Bishop Boniface, St. Augustine argued against restricting presentation for baptism to parents, listing (a) masters presenting the children of their slaves, (b) "those who had it in their power" presenting "little orphans", and (c) holy virgins caring for exposed foundlings as acceptable alternatives.<sup>13</sup>
2. In 1843, the General Assembly of the PCUSA responded to a memorial from the Presbytery of Lodiana respecting the baptism of the orphan children of heathen parents. The Assembly's reply stipulated that only those who had not yet attained to 'years of discretion' were to be baptized as infants, and only those children who were so committed into the care of Christian organizations "as to secure effectually their entire religious education. On this point, great caution is necessary."<sup>14</sup>
3. Reformed Books of Church Order: Chapter 3.B.1 of the OPC's *Book of Church Order* (2015) restricts presentation for baptism to parents. Chapter 1:1, Article 5.2.A of the RCA's *Book of Church Order* (2019) also allows for guardians to request baptism. Chapter 56-3 of the PCA's *Book of Church Order* (2019) allows for "some other responsible person" besides a parent to present a child for baptism. None of these sources offered an explanation of the position taken.
4. In April 2012, David Smolin published a lengthy paper entitled "Of Orphans and Adoption, Parents and the Poor, Exploitation and Rescue: A Scriptural and

---

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf101.vii.1.XCVIII.html>. See pgh. 6, pg. 409.

<sup>14</sup> Hodge, Charles, "The General Assembly of 1843" in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (July, 1843), 422-423.

Theological Critique of the Evangelical Christian Adoption and Orphan Care Movement”.<sup>15</sup> Though not dealing directly with the question at issue, this paper helpfully discussed several relevant issues, especially with regard to the differences between adoption in biblical times and adoption today.

5. The commission of the General Synod of the RCA submitted a 2007 paper entitled “Who May Present Children for Baptism?”, which was approved and encouraged for elders to use for purposes of study and reflection.

Though the RCA commission dealt with a different question, there is obvious overlap with the question before this Committee, and the paper may be studied with profit. The paper asserts that elders may recognize someone other than the biological or adoptive parent, or legal guardian, using their judgment to identify where “the recognized, primary parental responsibility for a child falls.”<sup>16</sup> They conclude: “Even if the legal situation may be out of synch with the reality ‘on the ground,’ elders should be free to welcome any candidates for baptism who are brought by a confessing church member who exercises a recognized, primary parental responsibility for a child.”<sup>17</sup> They go on to explain that this responsibility “should be recognized by others, and not just claimed by the individual. It should also be primary in the sense that the person is the normal decision-maker in the care and nurture of the child.”<sup>18</sup>

Summary: Nearly all of the above resources approached the issue from the perspective of the activity of presenting a child, rather than the obverse, ie, who may be presented for baptism. These questions are clearly related, but they are different, which limits the direct pertinence of these sources.

However, they were nearly unanimous on two points: 1) that presentation for baptism is not be restricted to biological parents, and 2) either implicitly or explicitly, that the matter was an issue for a local Session of elders to decide on a case by case basis. Both of these points inform this present position paper.

In addition, a number of important considerations were presented, such as ability to provide, assurance of Christian nurture, external recognition of responsibility, and extent of care. These concerns are also reflected in the above discussion, though the issue of Christian nurture is largely assumed, given our denomination’s memorial on Christian education.

---

<sup>15</sup> Smolin, David M. "Of Orphans and Adoption, Parents and the Poor, Exploitation and Rescue: A Scriptural and Theological Critique of the Evangelical Christian Adoption and Orphan Care Movement", in *Regent Journal of International Law* 8.2 (2012), Available at: [http://works.bepress.com/david\\_smolin/10/](http://works.bepress.com/david_smolin/10/).

<sup>16</sup> “Who May Present Children for Baptism?”, available here: <https://www.rca.org/resources/baptism-in-the-rca>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

The most thorough discussion by far can be found in the document “Who May Present Children for Baptism”, and yet even there, the bulk of the paper dealt with ecclesiological considerations and practical concerns rather than biblical exegesis. The category of “recognized, primary parental responsibility” is helpful, but still leaves many unanswered questions. Also, while mentioning the legal aspect of the question, the RCA’s document did not give it serious attention. This position paper has attempted to address these three lacunae, though doubtless much more remains to be said.

#### **IV. Conclusion –**

Prior to a profession of faith, there is a responsibility/authorization axis that must remain in balance when considering the propriety of baptizing young orphans in foster care. Full authorization is granted to those who have and are held to full responsibility. The typical foster care placement, as a temporary and limited arrangement, places the child under the care of a household, but is not an abiding and comprehensive redemptive action like adoption that makes them a covenant member of a household. Other statuses, such as guardianship, kinship care, and long-term foster care arrangements, may or not result in covenant membership, and so each Session must make that determination on a case by case basis, especially taking into account the above considerations.

Therefore, the Committee takes the position that foster children who are not yet able to make an acceptable profession of faith only be presented as candidates for baptism once the appropriate Session determines that a redemptive action has taken place which results in their covenant membership in a Christian household, and we respectfully recommend this position to the Augustine Presbytery of the Communion of Reformed and Evangelical Churches.

**CJ Bowen**

*Christ Reformed Evangelical Church, Annapolis, MD*

**Jim DuJack**

*Oakwood Bible Church, Troy, NY*

**Charles Humphrey**

*Communion Fellowship Church, Bristol, VA/TN*



**Proposed Constitutional Amendment  
Presented to Augustine Presbytery**

**Motion Presented by Christ Church, Raleigh, NC**

**Motion: To revise CREC Constitution Article V. B, striking two sentences as below.**

The Council will have a stated meeting every three years. ~~In the year that Council meets, Presbyteries must have their annual meeting at the same place and time.~~ If two thirds of the Presbyteries submit a written request to the Presiding Minister of Council, an ad hoc Council meeting can be called. The decision to call for an ad hoc meeting of Council cannot be made at Council. ~~The requirement that Presbyteries convene at the same place and time as Council does not apply to ad hoc meetings of Council.~~

**Explanation:**

In presbyterial church government, presbyteries are bodies made up of representatives from churches within specified geographical boundaries. They are the nearest court of appeal from the churches, and the closest circle of fellowship of pastors and elders outside of their local congregations. Ordinarily, stated meetings of presbytery are held within the geographical bounds of the presbytery so as to be as convenient as possible for all members—both ministers and elders —of the presbytery to attend.

Presbytery boundaries in the CREC tend to be exceptionally large. This requires extensive travel and sacrifice of time and resources for our presbyters to attend our annual stated meetings of presbytery. Every three years we impress even further upon our presbyters to travel across the country, or even across the world, so that our presbyteries can meet at the same time and place as our Council. This prevents many members of presbytery—both ministers and elders—from attending their own presbytery meetings, and puts two calendar years between their attendance. If there is a ministerial candidate to be examined at presbytery, he has to make arrangements to make it to whatever part of the country Council is meeting in that year. If a case is appealed to or referred to presbytery, all of the parties are expected to travel not to a somewhat local presbytery meeting, but to the national meeting place of the CREC.

The CREC does not have a General Assembly where all attending presbyters are engaged in the denomination's business. The CREC has a Council made up of two representatives of each presbytery. While there seems to be a general expectation for the non-Council members to attend meetings of Council, these men serve only as observers to the deliberations of Council. For non-council members to make travel arrangements to sit and listen to a process they have no part in is a waste of time and resources.

This current arrangement is inconvenient, expensive, burdensome, inefficient and unnecessary. In years when Council meets, presbyteries could schedule their stated meetings sometime in the weeks and months before Council at a meeting place within their geographical boundaries.

With this amendment, presbyteries may still elect to meet at the same time and place as Council. Presbyteries would have same freedom they have in non-Council years to meet at a time and place wherever and whenever they choose, but they would not be constitutionally obligated to meet in a specific place at a specific time.



COMMUNION OF REFORMED  
EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Augustine Presbytery 2019

Presiding Minister's List of Ordained Ministers

\*Indicates currently "without a call."

Tony Aguilar\*

Ray Barbeito

Chris Boland (when ordained)

CJ Bowen

John Correia

Mark Dewey\*

Paul Edgar

James DuJack

Duane Garner

Troy Greene

Harold Guptill

Wayne Hays (retired)

Virgil Hurt

Peter Jones

Gene Liechty\*

Jared McNabb (ministering out of bounds, pending BOP changes approved by Augustine 2017)

Steve Murphy

Brian Nolder

Brian Penney

Brian Phillips

Gregg Strawbridge

Burke Shade\*

Laurence Windham

The BOP states:

If a CREC minister does not receive a call within three years of having his "minister without call" status first recognized, he shall be declared released from his ministerial status by the church that holds his credentials unless specific permission is requested by the church and received from presbytery. This permission must be sought and granted on an annual basis. (BOP Article XII.4.b. Recognition of Ordained Ministers)