

General Synod Proposed Marriage Amendments

"The purpose of the Reformed Church in America... is to minister to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works." - rca.org/standards

R 16-14 proposes that the 2002 Order for Christian Marriage (which describes marriage between one man and one woman) become a constitutional liturgy, and therefore binding.

R 16-32 proposes that consistories or governing bodies "shall assure that marriages solemnized in a church or congregation are between a man and a woman."

Room for All Vision Statement

Compelled by the inclusive love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, Room for All envisions the day when people of all sexual identities and gender expressions are fully affirmed in the life and ministry of the Reformed Church in America.

Pastoral, relational, loving words, grounded in the biblical story of God's embrace that includes the excluded. Life-giving words that convey generosity, harmony, reconciliation, and peace. Vibrant words that envision joyful ministry in Jesus' name, to build up the Body of Christ.

RfA chooses to consider the proposed BCO amendments through the frame of this vision. How do they reflect the inclusive love of God revealed in Jesus Christ? Do they fully affirm all people? What do they mean for life and ministry in the RCA?

Some Implications of R-16-14 and R-16-32

1. RCA Ministers of Word and Sacrament vow to uphold the Liturgy and the BCO. If the 2002 Order for Christian Marriage becomes constitutional, ministers will be bound to refuse to conduct same-gender marriages or face possible charges. LGBTQ couples will be excluded from the freedom enjoyed by heterosexual couples seeking to be married in their RCA church by their RCA minister, without putting that pastor at risk. The joyful celebration of God's gift of love, perhaps conducted by a beloved pastor, becomes tinged with judgment, exclusion, implied threat, and disregard for existing pastoral relationships. Do double standards based on sexual or gender identity reflect the inclusive love of God made known to us in Jesus Christ?
2. The proposals would raise an exclusionary marriage liturgy to the constitutional level currently reserved for sacraments, membership and ordination, setting a new precedent in the RCA. By this standard, will LGBTQ people also be denied the other constitutional rites that define our life together? Further, does such elevation of marriage implicitly devalue single persons? Are all members of the one Body of Christ fully affirmed?
3. Trusting, collegial relationships based on shared ministry in the consistory and classis are potentially jeopardized. Consistories will be expected to patrol their pastor to make sure that the 2002 liturgy is used, and that no same-gender weddings are conducted. Similarly, if a consistory fails in its BCO-prescribed duty to prohibit a same-gender wedding, that consistory, along with the pastor, may be brought up on charges by a disapproving classis member. Should a liturgy for Christian marriage be a possible weapon for discipline? How would such a litigious climate among ordained office-holders affect the ministry of the RCA?

"For Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one, and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity...and might reconcile both groups to God." - Ephesians 2:14-16

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - Romans 15:5-7