

Summary of General Synod 2016's Decisions on Human Sexuality

Adapted from Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck

<https://caffeinatedtheologizing.wordpress.com/2016/06/15/a-summary-of-general-synod-2016-decisions-on-sexuality/>

Reparative/Reorientation Therapy

The General Synod (GS) heard from the Commission on Christian Action (CCA) based on GS 2015's decision to remove references to reparative/reorientation therapy from the RCA website.

Ultimately, the recommendation from CCA, with amendments, was: *"To direct the General Synod Council to remove all statements on the website supporting the use of reorientation/reparative therapy and to declare that the RCA does not support the use of reorientation/reparative therapy, but does affirm the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives."*

This recommendation WAS adopted.

Recommendations Pertaining to the RCA Special Council

1) R-16-42: *"To instruct the Commission on Theology to engage in a discussion of the theology behind our understanding of church order, and in particular, the authority of the General Synod statements on human sexuality, and to report to the 2017 General Synod."*

R-16-42 was NOT adopted.

2) R-16-43: *"To adopt the 'Order for Christian Marriage' that was approved and commended for use in the church by the 2002 General Synod (MGS 2002, pp. 181-192) for recommendation to the classes for approval as part of the Liturgy of the Reformed Church in America."*

R-16-43 WAS adopted.

3) R-16-44: *"To adopt the 'Order for Christian Marriage' as provided by the Commission on Worship that defines marriage as between two persons for recommendation to the classes for approval as part of the Liturgy of the Reformed Church in America."*

R-16-44 was NOT adopted.

4) R-16-45: *"To instruct the General Synod Council, in consultation with the Commission on Church Order and the regional synods, to explore the establishment of one or more affinity classes that may include people and congregations regardless of their perspective on human sexuality to ensure and allow relationship and mission together."*

R-16-45 was NOT adopted.

5) R-16-46: *"To instruct the General Synod Council to appoint a task force to explore and articulate the options and consequences within the RCA for grace-filled and orderly separation over time, should the different perspectives regarding human sexuality keep us from remaining as one, for report back to the 2017 General Synod."*

R-16-46 was NOT adopted.

R-16-56, a separate recommendation from the all-synod advisory committee, was brought forward. It read, after amendments: *“To direct the GSC, in consultation with the Professors of Theology, to develop a process of denomination-wide discussion centered on a Reformed understanding of the nature, purpose, authority, and interpretation of Scripture; and further, to identify existing and/or develop new resources in support of this process, for report to the 2017 General Synod.”*

R-16-56 as amended WAS adopted.

Report of Unfinished Business from GS 2015

R-16-16 came as a result of the 2014 General Synod’s request to incorporate a definition of marriage as between one man and one woman into the Book of Church Order (BCO). It reads, as amended: *“To amend the Book of Church Order by adding the following to Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2: Sec. 20. The consistory shall be assured that all weddings performed by their pastor and/or their church are between one man and one woman.”*

This WAS adopted, but...

R-16-16 was immediately referred to the Committee of Reference per BCO for review and report back later. The Committee of Reference returned the next morning with alternate wording to the adopted motion: *“...The consistory or governing body shall assure that marriages solemnized in a church or congregation are between a man and a woman.”*

R-16-16, as amended, WAS adopted.

Motion Regarding LGBTQ+ People

“No matter what position we as Christians have taken on the moral status of same-sex behavior, we reject all forms of mockery, degrading words and thoughts, economic oppression, abuse, threats, and violence made against members of the LGBTQ+ community, and we call on anyone involved in such behavior to repent and immediately begin walking in obedience to Jesus’ command to love.”

This motion from the floor WAS adopted.

Summary:

Passes statement denouncing reparative therapy

Statement on Human Sexuality by Commission on Theology: NOT ADOPTED

Marriage Liturgy for One Man/ One Woman: ADOPTED

Marriage Liturgy for Two Persons: NOT ADOPTED

Affinity Classes: NOT ADOPTED

“Grace-Filled Separation” NOT ADOPTED

Consistory’s Authority on Marriage: ADOPTED AS AMENDED

Motion on LGBTQ+ People: ADOPTED