

2015
PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE
REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

The 2015 General Synod adopted the following amendments to the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America and recommended them to the classes for their approval in accordance with the Rules and Amendments of the Government of the Reformed Church in America and the Disciplinary Procedures (*Book of Church Order [BCO]*, 2015 edition, p. 73). A brief explanatory comment (not in bold) precedes each proposed *BCO* amendment; it is not part of the proposed change to the Constitution and is not being voted on by the classes. For further background information about the proposed amendments, refer to the 2015 *Minutes of the General Synod*, which are referenced by page number. You may also access General Synod reports that are referenced in this document by visiting www.rca.org/minutes.

Proposed amendment 1 comes as a result of a recommendation made to the General Synod by the General Synod's Commission on Church Order. Proposed amendment 2 comes as a result of a recommendation made to the General Synod by the General Synod's Ministerial Formation Certification Agency.

The amendments in the text below are indicated with proposed deletions stricken out and additions underlined.

1. Elder Delegates to Classes (*MGS 2015*, R-40, p. 186)

The Commission on Church Order was asked to clarify the maximum number of delegates to classis a local church may have. This amendment is intended to provide the sought-after clarity. From the perspective of the Commission on Church Order, the number of allotted delegates provided for by previous *BCO* editions has not changed. However, since the current wording can be interpreted in more than one way, some classes may view this amendment as a change in the maximum number of delegates to classis a church may have.

Chapter 1, Part II, Article 3, Sec. 1 (p. 30 of 2015 edition)

a. A church shall not have more than four elder delegates. A church with three hundred or fewer confessing members shall have one elder delegate. A church with more than three hundred confessing members shall also have one elder delegate, and an elder delegate for each additional three hundred confessing members or fraction thereof, up to a maximum of three additional delegates. A church shall not have more than four such elder delegates.

b. A church without an installed minister shall have an elder delegate who shall not be counted as one of the above delegates allotted in subsection (a).

c. A collegiate church shall have at least one elder delegate for each of its constituent congregations.

2. Classis Determination Regarding Ministry Experience for Other Candidates (*MGS 2015*, R-56, p. 264)

This amendment was proposed by the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency. Through it, the agency is seeking to assist classes to determine which of a candidate's prior experiences qualify towards fulfilling the "at least five years' ministry experience" requirement for "Other Candidates" (commonly referred to as the Approved Alternate Route). The prior experience must assist the candidate to prepare "for leadership as a minister of Word and sacrament." While this amendment still provides the classis with interpretive authority about the candidate's experience, the amendment clarifies the intended result of the five years of experience – the experience will have prepared the person for the role of minister of Word and sacrament.

Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Sec. 4b (p. 48 of 2015 edition)

The classis shall determine: (1) The candidate has at least five years' ministry experience ~~and demonstrates leadership potential that prepares the candidate for leadership as a minister of Word and sacrament;~~ (2) the candidate gives evidence of the call, gifts, and experience for the ministry of Word and sacrament; and (3) the candidate, for compelling practical reasons, cannot complete a master of divinity degree at an accredited seminary.