

Synod 2021 Canceled, Sexuality Report Delayed

FEBRUARY 19, 2021

At its meetings this week, the Council of Delegates (COD) voted to cancel Synod 2021 and to defer any discussion or decision about the report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-Laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality until Synod 2022.

"There is a polarity in the opinions expressed between protecting the health and well-being of individuals and protecting the health and well-being of the denomination. It can feel as if there is no win-win solution," the committee that presented the cancelation noted as they explained the difficulty in making this decision.

Synod 2021 had been expected to take place on the campus of Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa. It would have been the first synod in two years, since Synod 2020 was also canceled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given a desire to meet as a denomination and deal with important matters, but also desiring to protect the health and wellbeing of synod attendees, the COD spent a great deal of time in prayer and discernment about how to proceed.

"The COD takes no pleasure in doing this. This is not a decision we come by lightly," said Michael Ten Haken, delegate from Classis Lake Superior.

"The idea of not having a synod again to tackle some of these major issues is pretty big," added Andy DeRuyter, delegate from Classis B.C. North-West. "But I think the health concerns of our delegates have to come before that."

In preparation for the COD meeting, the synodical Program Committee (the officers who served at synod in 2019) spent a great deal of time considering multiple options such as the possibility of a virtual synod or a hybrid model that allowed for regional gatherings of delegates who were connected to other regions via video. They also conducted a poll of the stated clerks of all classes.

This information, along with numerous letters and pieces of communication from individuals, congregations, and classes, were considered as the Program Committee, and subsequently the COD, weighed their decision.

One of those factors included ensuring good participation from both U.S. and Canadian delegates. Given current border and travel restrictions it seems highly unlikely that Canadians could be physically present at a synod in Iowa in June. In fact, Canadian delegates pointed out that even travel between local municipalities in Canada is currently not allowed.

"The reality is that people watch, and churches are a bit under the microscope in terms of if they are being respectful of health guidelines and the federal, provincial, and municipal bylaws that come into play in each particular area," said William Koopmans, delegate from Classis Hamilton. "Churches are being scrutinized in terms of what example they are setting to the broader community."

In the end, they voted in favor of canceling Synod 2021. They also voted to defer any discussion or decision about the report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality until Synod 2022. Churches are encouraged to make use of [The Challenging Conversations Toolkit](#) prepared by Pastor Church Resources (PCR) to help small groups study and discuss aspects of the committee's report which may be controversial.

The Program Committee will carefully review matters submitted for the *Agenda for Synod 2021* and will decide which matters are essential to be dealt with this year. Similar to 2020, those essential items will be referred to a special, virtual meeting of the COD to be held in June.

This [FAQ](#) may assist with any questions you may have.

See also *The Banner's* [coverage of this decision](#).

Kristen deRoo Vanderberg, CRC Communications

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