

Overture from the Reformed Church of Silverstream

Re: Sister-Church Relationship with the CRCA

Esteemed Brethren.

The Session of the Reformed Church of Silverstream respectfully overtures synod 2008 with the following:

Overture

That the Reformed Churches of New Zealand suspend the sister-church relationship with the CRCA .

Grounds

1. The CRCA has a settled practice of ordaining women to the office of deacon, with synodical approval. Appeals against the decision have failed. Remonstrations from the RCNZ has had no appreciable effect. The CER of the CRCA has confirmed that the matter is now effectively closed.
2. The principle violated by this practice is the same as with women in the office of elder. The diaconal office involves special ecclesiastical authority from God (Acts 6:3 with 1 Tim. 3:12 and 3:4-5). Office and ordination also involve special authority. It is true that deacons do not oversee the teaching ministry of the church as elders do. However, 1 Tim. 2:12 forbids a woman to teach *or exercise authority*. Not only does the practice of having ordained deaconesses contravene this Scripture, but also the principle behind it, the Headship of Christ over His church. Christ reflects His Headship by investing men with authority in home and church.
3. The CRCA decision to remove all deacons from the full council in those cases where women are serving as deaconesses does not solve the problem. First, it is wrong to try to remove that authority from the diaconate. As the above Scripture shows, *God* has given them authority. In any case, office and ordination still leave them with authority, at least in principle. Moreover, this action is contrary to BCF 30, which refers to the “elders *and deacons* who, together with pastors, form the council of the church.”
4. Taking no further action – other than for the sister-church relationship to remain under strain - would appear to send the message to our own members that the principles violated by the CRCA decision are of some concern, but not of great seriousness. Since it now seems unlikely that the CRCA will reverse its position, can the RCNZ leave the relationship under strain indefinitely, with no further response? The RCNZ has placed the relationship under strain because of a decision believed to be unBiblical and of some seriousness. Should we then not respond further to a failure to repent?
5. One of our other sisters - the Canadian Reformed Churches – has urged us to take seriously the concerns raised about the CRCA by the FRCA.