

Appendix 1

The Overture

Smithers Christian Reformed Church of Smithers overtures Classis British Columbia Northwest at its session, September 21-22, 2004, to:

1. appoint a committee to:
 - (a) study the issue of cohabitation* or common law living from a Biblical perspective;
 - (b) evaluate the reasons why cohabitation/common law living is so popular in our society and review statistics to determine if these relationships are usually lasting ones.
 - (c) recommend guidelines on how church councils should deal with members and regular attenders who cohabit or live in common law relationships.
2. Submit the report to the March, 2005 session of classis.
3. Submit the study committee report to the Synod of 2005 for the purpose of:
 - a. making the Christian Reformed Church, in general, more aware of the issue.
 - b. establishing guidelines on the practice of cohabitation/common law living that apply to the entire denomination.

Grounds:

1. Cohabitation and common law living are becoming more prevalent in our modern society, also among church members.
2. At present the Christian Reformed Church does not have an official position on cohabitation/common law living such as it has on homosexuality and other issues relevant to today's society
3. Local church councils struggle with the issue. Some office bearers condemn the practice as being un-Biblical because sex outside of marriage is wrong. (cf. Genesis 2:24, Matt. 19:4-9). Others believe the act of consummation (becoming "one flesh") constitutes a life-long commitment in the eyes of the Lord so that couples living common law are, in effect, married - albeit without the benefit of a public ceremony.
4. Church Councils would benefit from a thorough review of Biblical texts dealing with marriage and cohabitation/common law living and some guidelines as to how to approach church members living in common law relationships.

** We use the term "cohabitation" as meaning any unmarried, heterosexual couple who consistently share a common residence and engage in sexual intercourse.*