

# Report of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business, Part 1

FROM THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN ACTION  
([Workbook pp. 200-206](#))

## CA 24-1 (Middle East Ceasefire Communication)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to amend CA 24-1. (The committee's additions are underlined; the committee's deletions are struck.)

### CA 24-1 (amendment)

To direct the general secretary to write a letter to the president of the United States, the United States Secretary of State, and the United States ambassador to the United Nations ~~advocating for a~~ commending the work toward a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, as well as a letter to the prime minister of Canada commending his call for the same; and further,

To direct the general secretary to send a communication to the churches and assemblies of the Reformed Church in America, encouraging them to write to their representatives, senators, or members of Parliament to advocate for a ceasefire and recommitment to a just and lasting peace in Israel/Palestine, as well as sharing with them the resources listed in this report.

### Reasons:

1. This is an ongoing situation that has changed since the report was originally written, and we feel that this best reflects the current circumstances and encourages ongoing attention.
2. The committee also felt that the resources shared in this report are important to be shared with the entire denomination to equip congregations for meaningful dialogue and advocacy.

## CA 24-2 (Study on Spiritual Abuse)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to amend CA 24-2. (The committee's additions are underlined; the committee's deletions are struck.)

### CA 24-2 (amendment)

To direct the General Synod Council to undertake study on spiritual abuse, utilizing resources from CBE International, Tears of Eden, and others listed in the Commission on Christian **Action's report to the 2024 General Synod, as well as opening** communication with My Sanctuary Healing and other RCA connected spiritual abuse professionals to explore resources

that may be shared and/or developed for use in RCA congregations, assemblies, and affiliated institutions; and further,

To provide an initial report to the 2025 General Synod and a second report to the 2026 General Synod, reporting back to the 2025 General Synod.

Reasons:

1. The committee acknowledges that this needs to be both an immediate and ongoing priority, given the weight and impact of this topic.
2. The additional year will give the GSC more time, since a report in 2025 would give them less than a year to do the work.
3. The language of “second report” rather than “complete” or “final” was intentional, recognizing that this will be long-term, ongoing reflection and action.

FROM THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON RACE AND ETHNICITY  
([Workbook pp. 293-300](#))

RE 24-1 (Commissions to Annually Connect with Racial and Ethnic Councils)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to refer RE 24-1 as follows:

To refer RE 24-1 to the Commission on Church Order, in consultation with the Commission on Race and Ethnicity, to incorporate the ideas contained in RE 24-1 into the Bylaws of the General Synod.

1. The committee affirms the need for the original recommendation, and would encourage commissions to begin the requested consultation with racial and ethnic councils, but acknowledges that the mechanism for implementation has not yet been developed because GSC does not have authority to direct the commissions.

RE 24-2 (Commission Participation in Antiracism Training)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to vote in favor of RE 24-2.

FROM THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY  
([Workbook pp. 301-315](#))

TH 24-1 (Make Discernment Bibliography Available)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to vote in favor of TH 24-1.

TH 24-2 (Commend CoT Paper to Assemblies and Professorate)

The advice of the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business is to vote in favor of TH 24-2.

## OVERTURES

Overtures 1, 2, and 3: Reconsider Method of Covenant Shares Calculation  
([Workbook pp. 156-158](#))

In response to Overture 1 from the Classis of North Grand Rapids, Overture 2 from the Classis of Schenectady, and Overture 3 from the Classis of Schoharie, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

### ONB 24-1

To direct the Covenant Shares Review Committee to consider the concerns raised in these overtures as it continues its required three-year review of the Covenant Shares model.

Reasons:

1. The mechanism already exists for review of the new model through the review committee created by the General Synod in EC 19-10 (*MGS 2019*, pp. 52-53).
2. A mechanism also already exists for classes to request assessment relief from the GSC on behalf of churches in cases of extreme hardship.

Overture 4: Change *BCO* Provision Regarding Synod Travel Expenses  
([Workbook p. 159](#))

In response to Overture 4 from the International Classis of Texas, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

### ONB 24-2

To direct the Commission on Church Order, in consultation with the General Synod Council, to propose amendments to the *Book of Church Order* that will permit the General Synod to pay travel expenses for delegates outside the current limitations contained in *BCO* Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 3, Section 7, for report to General Synod 2025.

Reasons:

1. The committee strongly encourages a posture of supporting delegates from outside the U.S. and Canada to enjoy the full privilege of attending General Synod for our mutual benefit.
2. There are complex financial and logistical considerations inherent in this proposal, which warrant further consideration in keeping with our global vision for the Reformed Church in America.

Overture 5: Amend Restructuring Team Recommendation RF 24-2 ([Workbook p. 159](#))

In response to Overture 5 from the International Classis of Texas, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

ONB 24-3  
To deny Overture 5.

Reason:

1. This proposed amendment **doesn't reflect the compelling motivation** articulated by the restructuring team to keep the size of General Synod smaller. This proposal would increase the number of voting delegates at General Synod even higher than our current numbers, and the financial burden would be high.

Overture 6: Change Denominational Method of Collecting Gender-Related Data ([Workbook pp. 159-161](#))

In response to Overture 6 from the Classis of Mid-Hudson, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

ONB 24-4  
To direct the General Synod Council to develop a policy for the **denomination's collection and use of personal data, including** gender data and honorifics, that could include an option not to disclose this information; and further,

To study the linguistic implications of this policy in a multilingual denomination.

Reasons:

1. The committee finds compelling pastoral reason to consider the needs reflected in the overture.
2. As a denomination, we should strive to carry out our work in ways that do not cause harm.

3. An option not to disclose gender information is important both for those who are questioning their identity as well as for those who do not feel safe sharing their identity.
4. Translating English communications into other languages, particularly traditionally gendered languages such as Spanish, has additional considerations for implied meaning.

Overture 7: Extend End Date for Mutually Generous Separation Regulations  
Adopted in RF 21-3 ([Workbook p. 161](#))

In response to Overture 7 from the Classis of Central Plains, the Advisory Committee on Overtures and New Business recommends the following:

ONB 24-5  
To deny Overture 7.

Reasons:

1. The committee believes that maintaining the consistency of timelines with restructuring and plans to move forward is in the best interest of the whole denomination.
2. Because there are two years left to file a petition before the rules and regulations expire, there is still an opportunity to review the possibility of an extension in the future.

*Note: The committee has not yet completed its work on Overture 8 from the Regional Synod of Canada and will provide its recommendation regarding this overture once its work is complete.*