

The Banner: Volume 137, Number 12 (July 8, 2002), p. 27 reported the results of a major study on providing pastoral care to homosexual people. The following is shared with the permission of The Banner, a publication of the Christian Reformed Church.

PROVIDING PASTORAL CARE TO HOMOSEXUAL PEOPLE

The following are highlights from the synodical report by the Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members of the CRC:

1. All people, including homosexual people, should be encouraged to seek whatever healing God may provide for them. The report includes guidelines to help individuals and churches determine whether or not specific ministries to homosexual persons are effective.
2. Since how we label or identify people often defines them, Christians should beware of reducing people to some aspect of their identity, which can be dehumanizing. The church ought to enfold homosexual people with the hope of empowering them to live beyond their sexual identity.
3. Self-control is a gift of the Spirit, one of the fruits of the Spirit but also a command to be obeyed (see Titus 2:11-15, 2 Pet. 1:5-6). Homosexual people, like all other Christians, must exercise self control in order to live sexually chaste lives.
4. Christians should use language that describes the church community as the family of God. Because the church is a new community full of people from a variety of backgrounds, it needs to provide a haven for all members.
5. Christians should model and encourage intimate nonsexual relationships with people of the same gender and the opposite gender.
6. Churches should provide an environment for confession of sins and accountability to other Christians, both in small-group settings and public worship. Congregational prayers should include petitions for the health and well-being of single Christians' relationships.
7. Sermons should refer to a wide variety of sexual sins and give examples of God's grace and comfort to people who struggle with brokenness.
8. Churches should also offer pastoral care to the extended family of homosexual members.
9. The Christian community should insist on the political, civil, and social rights of all people, including homosexual people, in the larger context of doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8).