

NORTH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COUNCIL

Press Release
November 17, AD 2025

The 50th annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) convened on Tuesday afternoon, November 11, 2025, and continued until noon on Thursday. It was hosted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America at the Hope Community Reformed Church in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania and on the neighboring campus of Geneva College. The outgoing Chairman, Rev. Bruce Parnell, led the opening devotions.

One of the first orders of business was the election of officers. Elected as Chairman was Rev. Joel Dykstra of the United Reformed Churches. Rev. Benjamin Glaser, of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, was elected Vice Chairman. Rev. Ralph Pontier was elected to an eighth term as Secretary, and Mr. Danny McDaniel of the PCA was elected to a third term as Treasurer. The chairmanship and vice-chairmanship rotate annually among the Member Churches following an alphabetical listing.

NAPARC is a Council of thirteen confessionally reformed Member Churches (listed at naparc.org) which has a twofold purpose described in its constitution as first, providing a *“fellowship that enables the Member Churches to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another”* and secondly, *to hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.”* NAPARC has defined “organic union” as, *“two or more NAPARC Churches joining their diverse gifts, heritage and calling on the basis of the Scriptural mandate (Ephesians 4:1–16; Acts 15:1–16:5; John 17; 1 Corinthians 12:12–31) to form one church by uniting together in theology, polity and ministry. This would require the eventual integration of church courts and administrative and legal structures.*

In observance of the 50th anniversary of NAPARC, an open discussion was held regarding the objective of organic union, evaluating past efforts and commenting on the prospects of organic union in the future. The discussion revealed that all were thankful for the many ways NAPARC has fostered cooperation with one another in many areas, but few were hopeful of organic union in the foreseeable future, as defined by NAPARC. Some commented that if such unions between Member Churches were to occur, they must come from the bottom up, not imposed from the top down, noting that some church union efforts in the broader church have been destructive of both the Gospel and church unity and have weakened theological foundations through compromise. Nevertheless, the assembly was encouraged to continue to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). Since the Spirit has made us one, it is needful to strive, regardless of how difficult, to establish a bond of peace which is a bond of reconciliation – a bond that seeks to remove all sinful causes of division between Christians and churches.

On Tuesday evening, a devotional service was led by Dr. David Whitla, professor of church history at Reformed Presbyterian Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA. He spoke on the theme “With One Mind and One Mouth” based on Paul’s prayer in Romans 15:5-6. On Wednesday evening, a 50th anniversary dinner was held in the Geneva College Fieldhouse followed by an after-dinner keynote speaker, Dr. Chad Van Dixhoorn, professor of church history and theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC. More than a hundred guests joined the delegates to hear Dr. Van Dixhoorn urge the assembly to follow the “ministry maxim” of John the Baptist that Christ must increase and he must decrease. Van Dixhoorn quoted John Arrowsmith, a 17th century Puritan pastor and member of the Westminster Assembly, “True ministers set up Christ in their ministry. They are content, themselves, to stand in the crowd and to lift up Christ upon their shoulders, content not to be seen themselves so Christ would be exalted.” Van Dixhoorn then asked, “Is that not what we want for ourselves and our churches? He added, “Let us pray this will be a NAPARC ambition . . . and NAPARC legacy.”

The bulk of the time at NAPARC's annual meetings is spent in Member Churches giving oral reports about what the Lord is doing in their midst, and in praying for one another after each report. Reports were heard of both spiritual blessings and the struggles of ministry.

After the reports and prayers, five topics of discussion were taken up. Each topic was suggested by a Member Church in their written report contained in the docket distributed prior to the meeting.

The first, from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, was a "call for prayer, fasting, and days of humiliation regarding the rise in ministerial clergy/member sexual misconduct in NAPARC churches." In response the assembly approved a motion that NAPARC recommend to its Member Churches the observance of a day of humiliation, prayer and fasting in response to the too frequent cases of unfaithfulness by church officers. Wednesday, April 22, 2026, is a suggested date. Prayer is urged that all church leaders would honor Christ in faithful service to him.

The second topic of discussion, requested by the Canadian Reformed Churches, asked for clarification from Member Churches regarding their policies on the function and authority of position papers and statements of pastoral advice adopted by major assemblies. For most, such position papers and pastoral advice do not have confessional status but remain subordinate to the confessions.

The Heritage Reformed Congregations sought permission to establish a consultation (a separate meeting of representatives from Member Churches) on biblical counseling. Such consultations are held annually for NAPARC mission agencies and diaconal agencies and are part of the first purpose of NAPARC, to foster cooperation between Member Churches in various areas. The HRC was granted permission to organize a consultation on biblical counseling. No date was set, but the date of the next joint mission agencies and diaconal agencies consultation is scheduled for September 15-17, 2026, at the OPC administrative offices in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church asked, "What privileges should be accorded to fraternal delegates from other NAPARC churches at major assemblies? Most responded that fraternal delegates were given an advisory voice but not permitted to vote. They are generally permitted to remain present during executive sessions.

The United Reformed Churches in North America asked, "How do we ensure that doctrinal purity and personal piety are grounded in and guided by the gospel?" That is how can we avoid doing the right thing merely out of custom or tradition? How can we avoid falling into legalism? Discussion focused on keeping Christ and the Gospel central in both one's personal life as well as the corporate ministry of the church.

The NAPARC schedule runs from Tuesday afternoon to Thursday noon and provides many time slots for bi-lateral meetings between the inter-church or ecumenical committees of the Member Churches. These smaller meetings have proven fruitful for Member Churches to grow closer together and manifest more fully their oneness in Christ.

The minutes of the Council, along with NAPARC's Constitution, Bylaws, and other resources, can be found at NAPARC's website: naparc.org. The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for November 10-12, 2026, to be hosted by the URCNA at the First United Reformed Church in Oak Lawn, Illinois.

Rev. Ralph A. Pontier
NAPARC Secretary
secretary@naparc.org