

## Afterword

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During the last quarter century, issues related to homosexuality have disturbed the peace of the Reformed Church in America. Our church, of course, is not alone in this respect as nearly all denominations in the United States and Canada have struggled with internal disagreements regarding faithful biblical and theological responses to this culturally divisive issue.

During its long history, the Reformed Church in America has been confronted with any number of challenging issues. During the eighteenth century the issue of Americanization deeply divided the church; between 1754 and 1772, the colonial church was divided into factions known as “Coetus” and “Conferentie,” disagreeing over whether or not the American Dutch churches should continue to submit to the authority of the Classis of Amsterdam. Later, members of the church took divergent positions on the American revolt against England. More recently, the church has engaged explosive issues such as ordination of women, pluralistic universalism, commissioned pastors, and proposed mergers with Presbyterians.

These disagreements were never easy, and greatly taxed the energy and unity of the church. At some points, these conflicts resulted in the writing of new confessions or the drafting of changes to the polity and governance of the church. At other points, the church has agreed to live with its differences.

As with the issues above, the discussions surrounding homosexuality have divided congregations and families. Longstanding friendships have also been tested and, in some cases, fractured.

The author of one of the articles in this issue of the *Reformed Review*, David Myers, has been one of my closest friends since I arrived in Holland, Michigan to teach at Hope College in 1977. Over the years, David, an outstanding professor of psychology and leading textbook author, has shared many poignant moments with me and my family. Moreover, we share many common interests: teaching, noon-hour basketball games, Hope College sports, the church, and the Reformed faith.

Yet, David and I have significant disagreements over biblical and theological interpretations of homosexuality. To be honest, these disagreements and their implications have tested our friendship. Yet we have continued as friends, despite our sometimes profound disagreements. And the bond of the friendship

has at times been all the more important to me, precisely because it has endured such testing.

As the Reformed Church seeks to respond faithfully to the issue of homosexuality, our differences are not hard to see. What may be harder to see, but more satisfying to discover, is the bond of friendship and shared mission that unite us in the RCA to one another. In the context of such friendship and shared purpose, our differences may be no less profound, but we may view them differently, and hear each other differently, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

This issue of the *Reformed Review* has been published, not as the final word on this difficult subject, but as a contribution to an ongoing, difficult discussion among those who still recognize each other as friends in Christ.