

Christian Reformed Church elects a woman as vice president: First Synod with women delegates

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The Christian Reformed Church made history by electing a woman as vice president of its annual Synod—the first such meeting in which women were allowed to serve as delegates. Of the 180 delegates, 26 were female.

Pastor Thea Leunk of Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was elected vice president after finishing second in the vote for president on the June 14 opening day of the CRC Synod meeting at Calvin College.

Joel Boot, a pastor from Georgetown Township, Michigan, was chosen president for a second year, but he called it “a distinct honor and privilege” to be part of the “historic occasion” that was made possible by Synod action last year.

Applause greeted Leunk’s election, and some saw the vote as the church’s way of celebrating the breakthrough after a nearly 40-year battle for women’s full clergy rights.

Leunk pointed the spotlight away from herself, emphasizing her role as one of four officers heading up the weeklong meeting. The three other elected officers are all men. “It’s an honor and it’s a trust more than anything else,” Leunk said.

But her smile spoke of a sea change in the CRC. “Based on the people who have come up to me, it’s a day of celebration,” said Leunk, who has served on numerous CRC boards and as a Synod deputy at regional meetings.

The Christian Reformed Church has about 275,000 members in more than 1,000 U.S. and Canadian congregations. *-Religion News Service*