A Three-Legged Stool

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A THREE-LEGGED STOOL

Nearly 400 years ago, Reformed theologians gathered at Dordrecht in the Netherlands for a church meeting—a synod—that lasted nine months.

Delegates to the meeting covered many topics, including sessions on the challenge of ensuring that young people not only learned church doctrine, but also had their hearts, minds, and hands shaped in such a way that they would love God and serve their neighbor. Today, we call that “faith formation”—how the church effectively discipes and passes down the faith to the next generation.

What I find most compelling is the synod’s clear statement that faith formation was not primarily the responsibility of the church. Instead, the church was a partner with the home and the school in nurturing faith. This view continues today through a Reformed understanding and commitment to Christian education. It’s a stool with three legs—church, home, and school—all partnering together to help shape the next generation of effective kingdom citizens.

The Synod of Dort started something back in 1618: a partnership between church, home, and school that has been carried on for 400 years by Christians committed to the Reformed tradition. The stool with three legs has helped young people become passionate workers for Christ-centered renewal in every area of life from that day forward until today.

It’s in this tradition that Dordt College—soon Dordt University—stands. Our mission is to partner with the church and with families to form people who serve Christ—to help them find their place in God’s world and equip them to carry out that calling in ways that show Christ’s love and reflect that glory back to God. I’m personally glad that I didn’t need to endure nine months of church meetings, but I’m eternally grateful to the Synod of Dort for putting forth the three-legged stool concept of church, home, and school that has been a foundation of our work here at Dordt.

DR. ERIK HOEKSTRA, PRESIDENT

*“Synod of Dordrecht” by Pouwels Weyts*