

Committee on Ecumenical Relations

Supplementary Report to GS 2025

The CER has two matters it brings to the attention of the churches with a view to reporting to GS 2025. The first concerns a correction to the Study Report (Report 2), the second concerns a letter received from The Netherlands in mid October, 2024.

1. Re Report 2: Study Report Correction

The text of Rule 2 for ecclesiastical relationships that was recommended by the CER began as follows (lines 835-836):

*In circumstances where **no federative fellowship (Rule 1)** exists, churches may engage in ecumenical relationships with other local churches as per CO Article 50, in accordance with the following protocols*

After having distributed our report, we realized a slight change should be made for two reasons. In the first place, the meaning of the phrase “federative fellowship” is unclear and was not used elsewhere in our report. Secondly, not everything covered by Rule 1 is mutually exclusive to situations covered by Rule 2. For example, a relationship of Ecclesiastical Contact (Rule 1, Level 2) with the Free Reformed Churches in North America does not preclude a local CanRC and a local FRCNA from having a relationship under Rule 2.

Consequently, we amend our previous recommendation as follows:

*In circumstances where **no Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Rule 1, Level 1)** exists, churches may engage in ecumenical relationships with other local churches as per CO Article 50, in accordance with the following protocols*

2. Re Report 19: Request from The Netherlands

On October 17, 2024, the CER received a letter from the GKv Capelle aan den IJssel-Noord and the GKv Urk. These two churches did not participate in the merger of the GKv and NGK in May 2023, but continued as GKv churches.

Appealing to considerations found in the decision of GS-CanRC 2019 to end the sister church relationship with the GKv, these two churches request that some form of contact be established with them. After mentioning how a third church (Vroomshoop) has since joined the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CGKN), Urk and Capelle aan den IJssel-Noord write:

This means that we feel the pain of being alone. In that situation it would be a spiritual boon if you show that you see and support us in our course and search. To a certain degree, we are what is left of the GKv – though it is not our intention to continue the denomination – and have in effect reversed the decisions taken by earlier synods. Of course, we understand that your regulations do not permit full ecclesiastical fellowship at any short notice, nor is it our purpose to achieve a full sisterchurch-relationship. However, a sign of support, as proof that you do not forget us, would already mean much to us.

We would also like to know what you can do regarding the mutual acceptance of attestations and mutual opening up of pulpits to our pastors (even though this would probably be merely symbolic at this point in time).

Since the letter arrived very shortly before the deadline for reports to GS 2025, and since it concerned a new matter that is not entirely new, the CER, rather than rush this through, dealt with this letter at a meeting in January 2025. Since then we have sent a letter to these two churches, which included this supplementary report.

The CER is not seeking a mandate specific to these two churches. However, the CER did feel GS 2025 (and thus, all the CanRC), should be aware of this request. We recommend instead that we be given a general mandate for The Netherlands, as is being recommended for Indonesia, inserted between recommendations 3.1 and 3.2, and adding an appropriate ground, so that our recommendations regarding the GK are:

The CER recommends that synod decide:

1. To express thankfulness to the Lord for the merger of The Reformed Churches (DGK) and the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN) into the Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK);
2. To establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A¹ with the GK under the adopted rules;
3. To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 3.1 To convey this decision to the GK as soon as possible;
 - 3.2 As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions to promote ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in The Netherlands;
 - 3.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

Grounds:

1. Re 2: With the discontinuation of the sister church relationship between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church in Abbotsford (LRCA), and the subsequent merger of the DGK and the GKN to form the GK, all impediments previous CanRC synods have identified to ecclesiastical fellowship no longer exist.
2. Re 3.1: Establishing ecclesiastical fellowship has immediate consequences (e.g. table and pulpit fellowship); the GK should be aware of its existence as soon as possible.
3. Re 3.2: As evidenced by a letter received from the GKv Capelle aan den IJssel-Noord and GKv Urk, there continue to be parties with historical links to the former GKv that are currently not united to the GK but do seek support from the CanRC.

We trust that herewith we have informed the churches sufficiently.

May the Lord bless us as churches as we relate to Christ's body throughout the world. May He also bless the proceedings and deliberations of General Synod 2025.

In Christ's service,
On behalf of the CER,

Rev. Karlo Janssen (secretary)

¹ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words "category A" should be dropped.