



**General  
Synod**  
Aldergrove 2025

**ACTS**

of

**General Synod 2025**

of the

**Canadian Reformed Churches**

held at

**Aldergrove, British Columbia**

**May 6–16, 2025**

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## Acronyms and Nomenclature

The following conventions have been used in the Acts of GS 2025. The conventions are consistent with those followed since GS 2016.

1. The abbreviation for a subcommittee is the abbreviation of the main committee followed by a dash and then the abbreviation of the subcommittee. (E.g. CRCA–SRN, CCU–SCO).

2. Names of churches are shortened to “the PLACE NAME CanRC”. If a church is referred to by further qualifiers, the qualifier is added in parentheses.

Examples: the Aldergrove CanRC, the Glanbrook (Trinity) CanRC, the Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC.

3. Other church federations are referred to by their name in English. The abbreviation used is the one used in the language of origin.

Examples: the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ), the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB).

4. References to acts of general synods are according to the following formula: GS YEAR art. ### mat./obs./cons./rec. #.# or, for 2022, GS YEAR art. ### mat./dec./gr. #.#.

Examples: “GS 2016 art. 94 obs. 3.3.5” refers to Acts General Synod 2016 article 94 observation 3.3.5; “GS 2022 art. 124 dec. 3.3.2 & gr. 4.2” refers to Acts General Synod 2022 article 124 decision 3.3.2 and ground 4.2

If there is potential for confusing synods, the denominational acronym is added to GS (e.g. GS-GKN 2023 = the general synod of the Reformed Churches The Netherlands held in 2023; GS-CanRC 2019 = the general synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches held in 2019).

Because various abbreviations have been used over the years, the following list has the most common English and language of origin abbreviations, with notes where church federations have changed names in the course of time.

The following list attempts to cover the abbreviations used in the *Acts* of GS 2013 through GS 2022 and in reports to GS 2025.

Language of origin	English	Name in full
ARC	ARC	American Reformed Church (part of the federation of CanRC)
ARPC	ARPC	Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
ARTS	ARTS	Association of Reformed Theological Schools
ARTS	ARTS	Australian Reformed Theological Seminary
ATS	ATS	Association of Theological Schools
ATSA	ATSA	Advanced Theological Studies Assistance

Language of origin	English	Name in full
BBK	<i>RCA</i>	<i>Betrekkingen met Buitenlandse Kerken</i> (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of a Dutch church federation)
BC	<i>BC</i>	Belgic Confession
BoG	<i>BoG</i>	Board of Governors (of CRTS)
BPC	<i>BPC</i>	Bible Presbyterian Church
CA	<i>CA</i>	Classis Alberta
CanRC	<i>CanRC</i>	Canadian Reformed Church(es)
CanRCs	<i>CanRCs</i>	Multiple Canadian Reformed Churches
CBT	<i>CBT</i>	Committee on Bible Translations (for the CanRC)
CBTNIV	<i>CBTNIV</i>	Committee on Bible Translation for the New International Version (of the Bible)
CCCNA	<i>CCCNA</i>	Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (of the CanRC)
CCO	<i>CCO</i>	Classis Central Ontario
CCU	<i>CCU</i>	Committee for Church Unity
CCU-C	<i>CCU-C</i>	Committee for Church Unity - Coordinators
CCU-SCO	<i>CCU-SCO</i>	Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for Church Order
CCU-STE	<i>CCU-STE</i>	Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for Theological Education
CEIR	<i>CEIR</i>	Committee on Ecumenical and Interchurch Relations (of the OPC)
CECCA	<i>CECCA</i>	Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (of the URCNA)
CERCU	<i>CERCU</i>	Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (of the URCNA)
CGKN	<i>CRCN</i>	<i>Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i> (Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands)
CICR	<i>CICR</i>	Committee on Inter-Church Relations (of the ERQ)
CM	<i>CM</i>	Classis Manitoba

Language of origin	English	Name in full
CNSF	<i>CNSF</i>	Committee for Needy Students' Fund
CN	<i>CN</i>	Classis Niagara
CO	<i>CO</i>	Church Order
COW	<i>COW</i>	Classis Ontario West
CPE	<i>CPE</i>	Classis Pacific East
CPW	<i>CPW</i>	Classis Pacific West
CPTPF	<i>CPTPF</i>	Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding
CRCA	<i>CRCA</i>	Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (of the CanRC)
CRCA-SRN	<i>CRCA-SRN</i>	Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad – Subcommittee for Relations with churches in The Netherlands
CRCAus	<i>CRCAus</i>	Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
CRCNA	<i>CRCNA</i>	Christian Reformed Church in North America
CRTS	<i>CRTS</i>	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
CWeb	<i>CWeb</i>	Committee for the Official Website (of the CanRC)
EF	<i>EF</i>	Ecclesiastical Fellowship
EPCI	<i>EPCI</i>	Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland
EPCEW	<i>EPCEW</i>	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales
ERQ	<i>RCQ</i>	<i>Église Réformée du Québec</i> (Reformed Church of Quebec)
ESV	<i>ESV</i>	English Standard Version (of the Bible)
FCC	<i>FCC</i>	Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
FCS	<i>FCS</i>	Free Church of Scotland
FERC	<i>FERC</i>	First Evangelical Reformed Church (Singapore)
FRCA	<i>FRCA</i>	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCNA	<i>FRCNA</i>	Free Reformed Churches of North America
FRCSA	<i>FRCSA</i>	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (English is now the preferred language; previously also known as VGKSA)

Language of origin	English	Name in full
GGRCI GGRC	<i>CRCI</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvini di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia)
GGRI	<i>RCI</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia)
GGRI-KalBar	<i>RCI-KalBar</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Kalimantan Barat</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Kalimantan Barat)
GGRI-NTT	<i>RCI-NTT</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timur</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Nusa Tenggara Timor)
GGRI-P	<i>RCI-Papua</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Papua</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Papua)
GGRI-T	<i>RCI-Timor</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Timor</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia on the island of Timor)
GK	<i>RC</i>	Reformed Churches [The Netherlands]
GKH DGK	<i>RCR</i> <i>TRC</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken – Hersteld</i> (Reformed Churches – Restored) – renamed <i>De Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (The Reformed Churches)
GKNvv GKN	<i>RCNtf</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (voorlopig verband)</i> – Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (temporary federation) Renamed: “ <i>Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland</i> ”
GKSA	<i>RCSA</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika</i> (Reformed Churches in South Africa aka “Dopper Kerken”)
GKv	<i>RCN(l)</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – vrijgemaakt</i> (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – liberated)
HC	<i>HC</i>	Heidelberg Catechism
HRC HRCNA	<i>HRC</i> <i>HRCNA</i>	Heritage Reformed Congregations (= Heritage Reformed Churches in North America)
ICRC	<i>ICRC</i>	International Conference of Reformed Churches
IJC	<i>JCI</i>	John Calvin Institute (of the IRB)
IPB	<i>PCB</i>	<i>Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil</i> (Presbyterian Church of Brazil)

Language of origin	English	Name in full
IRB	<i>RCB</i>	<i>Igrejas Reformadas do Brazil</i> (Reformed Churches in Brazil)
IRC	<i>IRC</i>	Inter-church Relations Committee (of the RPCNA)
IRCK	<i>IRCK</i>	Independent Reformed Church in Korea
KJV	<i>KJV</i>	King James Version (of the Bible)
KPCA-K	<i>KPCA-K</i>	Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin)
KPCK	<i>KPCK</i>	Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (Previously cited as PCK (Kosin))
LRCA	<i>LRCA</i>	Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford
NAPARC	<i>NAPARC</i>	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
NASB	<i>NASB</i>	New American Standard Bible
NGK or NeGK	<i>DRC</i>	Dutch Reformed Churches (merger of GKV and NGK)
NGK	<i>NRC</i>	<i>Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (Netherlands Reformed Churches)
NIV/NIV84	<i>NIV/NIV84</i>	New International Version – 1984 Edition (of the Bible)
NIV2011	<i>NIV2011</i>	New International Version – 2011 Edition (of the Bible)
NKJV	<i>NKJV</i>	New King James Version (of the Bible)
NRSV	<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version (of the Bible)
OPC	<i>OPC</i>	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCA	<i>PCA</i>	Presbyterian Church in America
PCEA	<i>PCEA</i>	Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
PCUSA	<i>PCUSA</i>	Presbyterian Church (United States of America)
PHC	<i>PHC</i>	Psalter-Hymnal Committee (of the URCNA)
PJCO	<i>PJCO</i>	Proposed Joint Church Order (for a merged CanRC & URCNA)
PNG	<i>PNG</i>	Papua New Guinea
PRC	<i>PRC</i>	Protestant Reformed Churches (in North America)
PRCA	<i>PRCA</i>	Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia

Language of origin	English	Name in full
PresRC	<i>PresRC</i>	Presbyterian Reformed Church (in North America)
PRTS	<i>PRTS</i>	Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, MI)
PTP	<i>PTP</i>	Pastoral Training Program (of CRTS)
RCK	<i>RCK</i>	Reformed Churches in Korea
RCNZ	<i>RCNZ</i>	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
RCUS	<i>RCUS</i>	Reformed Church in the United States
RPCC	<i>RPCC</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada
RPCNA	<i>RPCNA</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
RPCCEE	<i>RPCCEE</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe
RPCT	<i>RPCT</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
RSE	<i>RSE</i>	Regional Synod East (of the CanRC)
RSW	<i>RSW</i>	Regional Synod West (of the CanRC)
SCBP	<i>SCBP</i>	Standing Committee for the Publication of the <i>Book of Praise</i>
SCABP	<i>SCABP</i>	Standing Committee for the Publication of the Australian <i>Book of Praise</i>
SERK	<i>IERC</i>	Independent Evangelical Reformed Churches [Germany]
SIP	<i>SIP</i>	Statement of Institutional Purpose (of the CRTS)
SRC	<i>SRC</i>	Sudanese Reformed Churches
SRN	<i>SRN</i>	Subcommittee for Relations with churches in The Netherlands (subcommittee of the CRCA)
TPH	<i>TPH</i>	<i>Trinity Psalter-Hymnal</i> (of the URCNA and OPC)
TUK	<i>TUK</i>	<i>Theologische Universiteit Kampen</i> (Theological University in Kampen (of the RCN))
URCNA	<i>URCNA</i>	United Reformed Churches in North America

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## Day 1 — Morning Session

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

### Article 1 – Opening of Synod

On behalf of the convening church, the Aldergrove CanRC, Rev. Rob Schouten called the meeting to order. He then read Colossians 1:1-23, and, with a focus on Colossians 1:18a, spoke some words of reflection (see Appendix 1). He then led in prayer and had the assembly sing Hymn 44. He spoke some encouraging words to the delegates regarding the work before them.

### Article 2 – Credentials

The credentials were examined by the Aldergrove CanRC and all was found to be in good order. Twenty-two primary delegates and two alternate delegates were present and signed the attendance list.

*Delegated by Regional Synod West 2024:*

*Ministers: Hendrik Alkema, Karlo Janssen, Joe Poppe, Rob Schouten, Carl Van Dam, Ken Wieske*

*Elders: Richard J. Buist (alt.), Ken Hoeksema (alt.), Lyndon Kok, James Teitsma, Bill van Beek, Adam van den Hoven*

*Delegated by Regional Synod East 2024:*

*Ministers: Rolf den Hollander, Peter Holtvliwer, Hilmer Jagersma, Marc Jagt, John Louwerse, Jake Torenvliet*

*Elders: Don Aasman, Gerald Boot, Ron Bremer, John Harsevoort, John Jager, Andy Jairam*

### Article 3 – Election of Officers

The following officers were elected to serve Synod for its duration:

Chairman: Rev. John Louwerse

Vice-chairman: Rev. Rob Schouten

First Clerk: Rev. Karlo Janssen

Second Clerk: Rev. Peter Holtvliwer

### Article 4 – Constitution of Synod

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. Schouten declared Synod constituted. The elected officers took their places. Rev. Louwerse called for a break to give the executive the opportunity to come with proposals regarding the proceedings of Synod and the division of tasks among the various members of Synod.

*Synod was adjourned.*

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## **Day 1 — Afternoon Session**

**Tuesday, May 6, 2025**

### **Article 5 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session at 1:00pm. The Chairman had the meeting sing Hymn 82:1. He read the roll and noted all synod members were present. He thanked the assembly for the confidence expressed in the elected officers of Synod. He expressed appreciation to the convening church for all the work done in preparation for Synod. He extended a warm welcome to the fraternal delegates and observers.

### **Article 6 – Housekeeping Matters**

The executive presented recommendations on housekeeping matters. Synod decided the following:

1. *Presence on the Internet:* Synod will publish the *Acts of Synod* on the federation website as they become available. However, as the *Acts* are adopted, Synod will decide whether there are any decisions which should not be immediately posted on the Internet. Confidential acts will not be posted. Only plenary sessions in which individuals address General Synod and the churches will be live streamed publicly (augmented as per GS 2025 art. 63).
2. *Time Schedule:*  
Monday to Friday  
morning session – 9:00 – 12:00  
afternoon session – 2:00 – 5:00  
evening session – 7:00 – 9:00  
Saturday May 10  
morning session – 9:00 – 1:00
3. *Devotions:* Synod shall begin and close each day in plenary session with Scripture reading, prayer and singing. Mealtimes will be opened with Scripture reading and prayer. A schedule will be handed out for the mealtime and evening devotions.
4. *Press Release:* A press release shall be published after Synod has been closed.
5. *Advisory Committees:* Advisory Committees shall use the template provided by the first clerk for their proposals. These proposals shall be submitted via email to the first clerk before they are dealt with in plenary session. The first clerk will ensure distribution digitally and in print upon request.
6. *Synod Documents:* Copies of internal synod documents are available only to members of synod and fraternal delegates. Officially delegated observers will receive all non-confidential materials.
7. *Guidelines:* For all procedures the Guidelines for Synod shall apply.
8. *Travel expenses:* Expenses are to be submitted, with receipts, to the convening church using the supplied form.
9. *Roll call:* Roll call shall take place each plenary session by means of a visual check by the executive.

### **Article 7 – Late Submissions**

Regarding late submissions the executive recommended the following:

1. Letters from the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) and Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC): admitted.
2. Credo Christian High School re visiting GS 2025 on the morning of Monday, May 12: admitted and agreed to accommodate.
3. Letter from Convening Church re confidential materials: admitted.
4. Letter from the Carman East CanRC re General Fund: admitted as this was mandated by GS 2022.
5. Appointment letters from various Synod committees: admitted as these were mandated by GS 2022.
6. Letter re admissibility of two personal appeals: admitted as it pertains to appeals already on the agenda (listed 8.6.8).
7. Letter re admissibility of appeals submitted without prior notification: admitted as it pertains to appeals already on the agenda (listed under 8.6.8).
8. Letter from the Convening Church re item 7 above: admitted for information.

## **ADOPTED**

### **Article 8 – Format of the Acts**

#### **1. Materials**

- 1.1 Letters from: Glanbrook (Trinity) (8.4.4), Hamilton (Cornerstone) (8.1.8), Flamborough (Redemption) (8.1.4), Ancaster (8.1.2), Attercliffe (8.1.3).
- 1.2 Appeal from Chilliwack (8.6.6).

#### **2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The submissions were declared admissible

Grounds: These submissions interact with GS 2022 art. 7.8 and were received on time.

#### **3. Observations**

- 3.1 The above submissions express concern over GS 2022 art. 7.8 to change the format of synodical decisions from the traditional structure:

*Materials – Admissibility – Observations – Considerations – Recommendations*  
to the structure:

*Materials – Admissibility – Decisions – Grounds.*

- 3.2 The churches argue that the previous format:

- Better reflected the content of overtures, appeals, and the thoughts of the churches through the “Observations” section.
- Explained the reasoning of a Synod more fully through “Considerations.”
- Provided a clearer basis for accountability and understanding, especially for future assemblies and local office-bearers.

- 3.3 The Glanbrook (Trinity) CanRC overture notes that a similar proposal was already rejected by GS 2013 after full interaction with the churches. GS 2022 adopted the new format without reference to this prior decision and without receiving an overture from the churches.

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- 3.4 Several submissions (Glanbrook, the Chilliwack CanRC, the Hamilton (Cornerstone) CanRC) express concern that the change in 2022 was adopted via an informal letter and motion, with no clear procedural justification or transparency for the churches.
- 3.5 Chilliwack notes that decisions are now harder to interpret and appeal.
- 3.6 The Flamborough (Redemption) CanRC and Cornerstone highlight how the observations and considerations serve a distinct ecclesiastical purpose, making synodical reasoning both transparent and logically traceable. They argue that brevity should not come at the cost of ecclesiastical clarity and accountability.
- 3.7 The submissions uniformly request that Synod 2025 restore the previous format and codify it in the Guidelines to ensure consistent, transparent recording of synodical decisions.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The churches raise valid concerns. The previous format supported an ecclesiastical manner of decision-making (CO art. 30) by:
  - Summarizing the voices of the churches (Observations),
  - Articulating the logic of Synod's evaluation (Considerations), and
  - Stating the actual action (Recommendations).
- 4.2 The new format lacks transparency. Without observations and considerations:
  - Readers must cross-reference other documents to understand Synod's response to the churches.
  - Churches cannot easily see whether their concerns were heard or how their arguments were weighed.
  - Future appeals become more difficult to formulate due to insufficient published reasoning.
- 4.3 The manner in which the GS 2022 change was adopted—via an informal letter and in-session motion—did not meet the standards normally expected for structural decisions. It also bypassed prior synodical precedent (GS 2013).
- 4.4 A uniform format, clearly stipulated in the Guidelines for Synod, would serve the churches by providing consistent expectations and strengthening trust in the decision-making process.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To return to the previously used format for all synodical decisions:  
*Materials – Admissibility – Observations – Considerations – Recommendation(s)*
- 5.2 To revise the *Guidelines for General Synod* to specify this format as the standard for all future Synods.

#### ADOPTED

*For the Guidelines as revised by GS 2025, see Appendix 25.*

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**Article 9 – Agenda**

- 1 OPENING ON BEHALF OF THE CONVENING CHURCH
- 2 EXAMINATION OF THE CREDENTIALS
  - 2.1 Credentials Regional Synod East (RSE)
  - 2.2 Credentials Regional Synod West (RSW)
  - 2.3 Credentials Fraternal Delegates & Observers
    - 2.3.1 Credentials Delegate: Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)
    - 2.3.2 Credentials Delegates: Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)
    - 2.3.3 Credentials Delegate: United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)
    - 2.3.4 Credentials Delegate: Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)
    - 2.3.5 Credentials Delegate: Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)
    - 2.3.6 Credentials Delegate: Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
    - 2.3.7 Credentials Observer: Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)
    - 2.3.8 Credentials Delegate: Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GRCI)
    - 2.3.9 Credentials Delegate: Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ)
    - 2.3.10 Credentials Observer: Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK)
    - 2.3.11 Credentials Observer: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)
- (During the course of General Synod credentials were received for observers from the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) and the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC))*
- 3 ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS
- 4 CONSTITUTION OF SYNOD
- 5 INFORMATION FROM THE CONVENING CHURCH
- 6 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA
- 7 SETTING OF THE TIME SCHEDULE
- 8 INCOMING MAIL
  - 8.1 GENERAL MATTERS
    - 8.1.1 GKN request for sister church relationship
    - 8.1.2 Ancaster letter re Format of the Acts of GS
    - 8.1.3 Attercliffe re Format of the Acts of GS
    - 8.1.4 Flamborough (Redemption) letter re Format of the Acts of GS
    - 8.1.5 Glanbrook (Trinity) re Format of Acts
    - 8.1.6 Chilliwack re Format of Acts
    - 8.1.7 Guelph (Emmanuel) re delegate selection for GS officers
    - 8.1.8 Hamilton (Cornerstone) Overture re Housekeeping matters
    - 8.1.9 Glanbrook (Trinity) letter re procedure for Liturgical Forms
    - 8.1.10 Langley re procedure re CO55 (cf. 8.3.8.1.35)

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- 8.1.11 FCC letter of greetings
- 8.1.12 FCS response to invitation to attend Synod
- 8.1.13 letter from Credo Christian High School re visit
- 8.1.14 letter from the Correspondence Committee Aldergrove re retention of material
- 8.2 COMMITTEE REPORTS
  - 8.2.1 Synod Guelph 2022
    - 8.2.1.1 Guelph (Emmanuel) cover letter re GS 2022
    - 8.2.1.2 Guelph (Emmanuel) re Financial Report GS 2022
    - 8.2.1.3 Guelph (Living Word) re Audit GS 2022
  - 8.2.2 Archives of GS 2022
    - 8.2.2.1 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) Report re inspection of Archives GS 2022
    - 8.2.2.2 Burlington (Ebenezer) Report re Archives GS
  - 8.2.3 Days of Prayer ad CO art. 54
    - 8.2.3.1 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) and Edmonton (Providence) re Days of Prayer
  - 8.2.4 Committee for Needy Student Fund - (CNSF)
    - 8.2.4.1 Grassie (Covenant) CNSF Report to GS 2025
  - 8.2.5 Committee for the Official Website - (CWeb)
    - 8.2.5.1 CWeb Report to GS 2025
  - 8.2.6 Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS)
    - 8.2.6.1 BoG at CRTS Report to GS 2025
    - 8.2.6.2 CRTS Supplemental Report
  - 8.2.7 Committee for Pastoral Training Program (CPTPF)
    - 8.2.7.1 CPTPF Report to GS 2025
  - 8.2.8 Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP)
    - 8.2.8.1 SCBP Report to GS 2025
    - 8.2.8.2 SCBP Supplement Report re Proposed Songs
    - 8.2.8.3 SCBP Further Note on SCBP Reports
    - 8.2.8.4 SCBP additional letter re mandate
  - 8.2.9 Committee for Bible Translations (CBT)
    - 8.2.9.1 CBT Report to GS 2025
  - 8.2.10 Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER)
    - 8.2.10.1 Report 1: General Mandate
    - 8.2.10.2 Report 2: CER Study Mandate
    - 8.2.10.3 Report 3: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)
    - 8.2.10.4 Report 4: Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ)
    - 8.2.10.5 Report 5: Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)
    - 8.2.10.6 Report 6: Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)

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- 8.2.10.7 Report 7: Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K)
- 8.2.10.8 Report 8: Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
- 8.2.10.9 Report 9: Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)
- 8.2.10.10 Report 10: Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)
- 8.2.10.11 Report 11: Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC)
- 8.2.10.12 Report 12: United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)
- 8.2.10.13 Report 13: Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)
- 8.2.10.14 Report 14: Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB)
- 8.2.10.15-17: Introduction to the Indonesia Reports
- 8.2.10.15 Report 15: Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI)
- 8.2.10.16 Report 16: The Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI)
- 8.2.10.17 Report 17: Reformed Churches in Indonesia on the island of Timor (GGRI-T)
- 8.2.10.18 Report 18: Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK)
- 8.2.10.19 Report 19: Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK)
- 8.2.10.20 Report 20: Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ)
- 8.2.10.21 Report 21: Free Church of Scotland (FCS)
- 8.2.10.22 Report 22: Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC)
- 8.2.10.23 Report 23: Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA)
- 8.2.10.24 Report 24: North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)
- 8.2.10.25 Report 25: International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)
- 8.2.10.26 CER supplementary report to GS 2025 (re GK)
- 8.2.10.27 CER financial report 2022-2025
- 8.2.10.28 Confidential submission from CER re 8.2.10.16 and 8.2.10.17
- 8.2.11 Address Church
  - 8.2.11.1 Report from the Address Church - Burlington (Ebenezer)
- 8.2.12 General Fund
  - 8.2.12.1 General Fund Report Carman East
  - 8.2.12.2 Carman West review of General Fund
- 8.3 LETTERS FROM THE CHURCHES REGARDING THE REPORTS
  - 8.3.1 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re term 'Audit' in reports
  - 8.3.2 Calgary re GS 2022 Financial report
  - 8.3.3 Letter Regarding Days of Prayer ad CO art. 54
    - 8.3.3.1 Grassie (Covenant) re Days of Prayer report
  - 8.3.4 Letter Regarding CNSF
    - 8.3.4.1 Fergus North re CNSF
    - 8.3.4.2 Willoughby Heights re CNSF

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- 8.3.5 Letter Regarding CWeb - none
- 8.3.6 Letter Regarding CRTS
  - 8.3.6.1 Toronto (Bethel) re CRTS 6th professor
- 8.3.7 Letters Regarding CPTPF
  - 8.3.7.1 Willoughby Heights re CPTPF
- 8.3.8 Letters Regarding SCBP
  - 8.3.8.1 Sub Proposed songs incl. hymn cap and general interactions
    - 8.3.8.1.1 Aldergrove re SCBP proposed songs
    - 8.3.8.1.2 Aldergrove Attachment #2 re proposed songs (Psalms)
    - 8.3.8.1.3 Aldergrove Attachment #3 re proposed songs (Hymns)
    - 8.3.8.1.4 Aldergrove Attachment #4 re proposed songs (Psalms & Hymns)
    - 8.3.8.1.5 Aldergrove re SCBP proposed songs 2
    - 8.3.8.1.6 Attercliffe re SCBP report points 2,3,6,7
    - 8.3.8.1.7 Barrhead re SCBP report re Psalms and Hymns and Liturgical Forms (cf. 8.3.8.2.3)
    - 8.3.8.1.8 Burlington (Fellowship) SCBP report re songs
    - 8.3.8.1.9 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re SCBP Hymns
    - 8.3.8.1.10 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re predominance of Psalms and RSE 2024 re CO art. 55
    - 8.3.8.1.11 Caledonia re SCBP report Liturgical Forms and Principled View (cf. 8.3.8.2.5)
    - 8.3.8.1.12 Calgary re SCBP report various
    - 8.3.8.1.13 Carman East re SCBP report Principled View
    - 8.3.8.1.14 Chilliwack re SCBP Liturgical Forms and Principled View
    - 8.3.8.1.15 Devon re SCBP re proposed hymn
    - 8.3.8.1.16 Edmonton (Immanuel) cover letter for 9 appendices
    - 8.3.8.1.17 Edmonton (Immanuel) re SCBP mandate items
    - 8.3.8.1.18 Edmonton (Immanuel) re SCBP supplement - proposed songs
    - 8.3.8.1.19 Edmonton (Providence) re SCBP report re errata section 2 #13
    - 8.3.8.1.20 Elm Creek re SCBP5 funding/publish model
    - 8.3.8.1.21 Elm Creek re SCBP6 proposed psalm and hymns
    - 8.3.8.1.22 Elm Creek re SCBP7 Principled View
    - 8.3.8.1.23 Fergus (Maranatha) re SCBP Principled Guidelines
    - 8.3.8.1.24 Fergus (Maranatha) re SCBP Producing an Augment
    - 8.3.8.1.25 Fergus (Maranatha) re SCBP Proposed Hymns
    - 8.3.8.1.26 Fergus (Maranatha) re SCBP Proposed Psalms
    - 8.3.8.1.27 Flamborough (Redemption) re SCBP report re proposed Psalms and Hymns

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- 8.3.8.1.28 Grand Rapids re SCBP report re proposed Psalms and Hymns
- 8.3.8.1.29 Grand Valley re SCBP Liturgical Forms and Principled View (cf. 8.3.8.2.12)
- 8.3.8.1.30 Grassie (Covenant) re SCBP Principled View
- 8.3.8.1.31 Guelph (Emmanuel) re SCBP report sect 2,3,5,6
- 8.3.8.1.32 Hamilton (Cornerstone) re proposed songs
- 8.3.8.1.33 Hamilton (Providence) re SCBP re publishing & funding
- 8.3.8.1.34 Kerwood (Grace) re proposed hymn
- 8.3.8.1.35 Langley re SCBP report re procedure, CO 55, Psalms, Hymns, cap (cf. 8.1.10)
- 8.3.8.1.36 Neerlandia re SCBP report re proposed Psalms and Hymns
- 8.3.8.1.37 Nooksack Valley re SCBP report Liturgical Forms & Principled View (cf. 8.3.8.2.13)
- 8.3.8.1.38 Orangeville re SCBP report re proposed Psalms and Hymns (cf. 8.3.8.2.14)
- 8.3.8.1.39 Ottawa (Jubilee) re SCBP report Hymns
- 8.3.8.1.40 Owen Sound re SCBP report re proposed Psalms and Hymns
- 8.3.8.1.41 St. Albert re SCBP report re Augment
- 8.3.8.1.42 Taber re SCBP report
- 8.3.8.1.43 Toronto (Bethel) re SCBP report
- 8.3.8.1.44 Winnipeg (Grace) re SCBP proposed Psalms and Hymns
- 8.3.8.1.45 Winnipeg (Redeemer) re SCBP report re proposed Psalms and Hymns
- 8.3.8.1.46 Willoughby Heights re SCBP report various (cf. 8.3.8.2.17)
- 8.3.8.2 Sub Liturgical Forms
  - 8.3.8.2.1 Aldergrove re SCBP Lord's Supper Form
  - 8.3.8.2.2 Arthur re SCBP Lord's Supper Form
  - 8.3.8.2.3 Barrhead re SCBP report re Psalms and Hymns and Liturgical Forms (cf. 8.3.8.1.7)
  - 8.3.8.2.4 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re SCBP Lord's Supper Form
  - 8.3.8.2.5 Caledonia re SCBP report Liturgical Forms and Principled View (cf. 8.3.8.1.11)
  - 8.3.8.2.6 Chilliwack re SCBP Liturgical Forms and Principled View (cf. 8.3.8.1.14)
  - 8.3.8.2.7 Elm Creek re SCBP2 Lord Supper Form
  - 8.3.8.2.8 Elm Creek re SCBP3 proposed shorter LS forms
  - 8.3.8.2.9 Fergus (Maranatha) re SCBP Liturgical Form of Lord's Supper
  - 8.3.8.2.10 Flamborough (Redemption) re SCBP proposed shorter LS forms
  - 8.3.8.2.11 Guelph (Living Word) re 8.2.8.1 re Lord Supper form

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- 8.3.8.2.12 Grand Valley re SCBP Liturgical Forms and Principled View (cf. 8.3.8.1.29)
- 8.3.8.2.13 Nooksack Valley re SCBP report Liturgical Forms and Principled View (cf. 8.3.8.1.37)
- 8.3.8.2.14 Orangeville re SCBP proposed shorter LS forms (cf. 8.3.8.1.38)
- 8.3.8.2.15 St. Albert re SCBP Liturgical Form of Lord's Supper
- 8.3.8.2.16 Surrey (Maranatha) re SCBP proposed shorter LS Forms
- 8.3.8.2.17 Willoughby Heights re SCBP report various (cf. 8.3.8.1.46)
- 8.3.9 Letter regarding CBT Report
  - 8.3.9.1 Calgary re CBT report
- 8.3.10 Letters Regarding CER Report
  - 8.3.10.1 Ancaster re CER report 1 general mandate re licensure
  - 8.3.10.2 Barrhead re CO art.50 and ARPC, ERQ
  - 8.3.10.3 Brampton (Grace) re CER re CO art. 50 re Ecclesiastical Relationships
  - 8.3.10.4 Brampton (Grace) re CER re rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship
  - 8.3.10.5 Burlington (Fellowship) CER on CO art. 50 re Ecclesiastical Fellowship
  - 8.3.10.6 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re CER on CO art. 50 re Ecclesiastical Fellowship
  - 8.3.10.7 Calgary re CER report
  - 8.3.10.8 Carman East re CER report 1 mandate
  - 8.3.10.9 Flamborough (Redemption) re CER general
  - 8.3.10.10 Grand Rapids re CER report
  - 8.3.10.11 Guelph (Emmanuel) re CER report RPCC / PCA reports 11&19
  - 8.3.10.12 Hamilton (Providence) re CER sub report 1 study mandate
  - 8.3.10.13 Nooksack Valley re CER report
  - 8.3.10.14 Attercliffe re CER sub report 2
  - 8.3.10.15 Chilliwack re CER sub report 2
  - 8.3.10.16 Edmonton (Immanuel) re CER sub report 2
  - 8.3.10.17 Fergus North re CER sub report 2
  - 8.3.10.18 Grassie (Covenant) re CER sub report 2
  - 8.3.10.19 Fergus North re CER sub report 3 ARPC
  - 8.3.10.20 Grassie (Covenant) re CER sub report 3 ARPC
  - 8.3.10.21 Hamilton (Providence) re CER sub report 3 ARPC
  - 8.3.10.22 Fergus (Maranatha) re CER sub report 10 RPCNA
  - 8.3.10.23 Tintern Spring Creek re CER sub report 12 URCNA
  - 8.3.10.24 Tintern Spring Creek re CER re above appx URCNA Escondido 2024 pg 412-416
  - 8.3.10.25 Smithville re CER sub report 17 GGRI-T

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8.3.10.26 Fergus (Maranatha) re CER sub report 19 GK

8.3.10.27 Glanbrook (Trinity) re CER sub report 21 FCS

#### 8.4 OVERTURES

8.4.1 Overture re Liturgical Forms re phrase “summarized in the confessions”

8.4.1.1 Hamilton (Blessings) cover letter Overture re Liturgical Forms

8.4.1.2 Classis Central Ontario (CCO) Overture to RSE 2020 re Liturgical Forms

8.4.2 RSE 2024 cover letter re Overtures

8.4.2.1 RSE 2024 Overture re Footnote for Apostles’ Creed

8.4.2.2 RSE 2024 Overture re CO art. 55

8.4.2.3 RSE 2024 Overture re Shortening the Duration of GS

8.4.2.4 RSE 2024 Overture re CO art. 49, 44, 47 (CCO)

8.4.2.5 RSE 2024 Overture re CO art. 49, 44, 47 (CNO)

8.4.3 RSW 2024 cover letter re Overtures

8.4.3.1 RSW 2024 Overture re CO art. 30

8.4.3.2 RSW 2024 Overture re CO art. 55 (CPE)

8.4.3.3 RSW 2024 Overture re CO art. 55 (CPW)

8.4.3.4 RSW 2024 Overture re Form of Baptism of Infants

8.4.4 Glanbrook (Trinity) Overture re Format of Synod Decisions

8.4.5 Glanbrook (Trinity) Overture re Length of Terms CER

#### 8.5 LETTERS FROM THE CHURCHES REGARDING THE OVERTURES

8.5.1 Apostles’ Creed (Overture 8.4.2.1)

8.5.1.1 Attercliffe re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.2 Barrhead re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.3 Caledonia re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.4 Calgary re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.5 Carman East re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.6 Carman West re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.7 Chilliwack re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.8 Cloverdale re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.9 Edmonton (Immanuel) re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.10 Elm Creek re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.11 Fergus (Maranatha) re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.12 Fergus North re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.13 Edmonton (Providence) re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.14 Flamborough (Redemption) re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.15 Houston re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.16 Neerlandia re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.1.17 Willoughby Heights re 8.4.2.1 Footnote Apostles’ Creed

8.5.2 CER terms (Overture 8.4.5)

8.5.2.1 Attercliffe re 8.4.5 re CER length of term

8.5.3 CO art. 30 (Overture 8.4.3.1)

8.5.3.1 Arthur re RSW re CO art. 30

8.5.3.2 Barrhead re CO art. 30

8.5.3.3 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re CO art. 30

8.5.3.4 Caledonia re RSW re CO art. 30

8.5.3.5 Calgary re RSW re CO art. 30

8.5.3.6 Carman East re RSW re CO art. 30

8.5.3.7 Carman West re RSW re CO art. 30

8.5.3.8 Dunnville West re CO art. 30

8.5.3.9 Elm Creek re CO art. 30

8.5.3.10 Elora re CO art. 30

8.5.3.11 Fergus (Maranatha) re CO art. 30

8.5.3.12 Flamborough (Redemption) re CO art. 30

8.5.3.13 Grand Rapids re CO art. 30

8.5.3.14 Grand Valley re CO art. 30

8.5.3.15 Grassie (Covenant) re CO art. 30

8.5.3.16 Houston re CO art. 30

8.5.3.17 Lincoln (Vineyard) re CO art. 30

8.5.3.18 Neerlandia re CO art. 30

8.5.3.19 Niagara South re CPW CO art. 30

8.5.3.20 St. Albert re RSW re Co art. 30

8.5.3.21 Toronto (Bethel) re CO art. 30

8.5.3.22 Willoughby Heights re CPW CO art. 30

8.5.4 CO art. 49, 47, 44 (Overtures 8.4.2.4, 8.4.2.5)

8.5.4.1 Ancaster re 8.4.2.4 & 8.4.2.5 CO art. 49 CCO CNO

8.5.4.2 Brampton (Grace) re Overture re CO art. 49 (CCO, CNO)

8.5.4.3 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re Overture re CO art. 49 (CCO, CNO)

8.5.4.4 Caledonia re Overture re CO art. 49 (CCO, CNO)

8.5.4.5 Calgary re RSE CO art. 49 (CCO)

8.5.4.6 Calgary re RSE CO art. 49 (CNO)

8.5.4.7 Carman East re RSE CO art. 49 (CCO)

8.5.4.8 Carman East re RSE CO art. 49 (CNO)

8.5.4.9 Chilliwack re CO art. 49 broader representation

8.5.4.10 Cloverdale re 8.4.2.4 CO art. 49 (CCO)

8.5.4.11 Cloverdale re 8.4.2.5 CO art. 49 (CNO)

8.5.4.12 Coaldale re 8.4.2.4 CO art. 49 (CCO)

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- 8.5.4.13 Coaldale re 8.4.2.5 CO art. 49 (CNO)
- 8.5.4.14 Edmonton (Immanuel) re 8.4.2.4 CO art. 49 (CCO)
- 8.5.4.15 Edmonton (Immanuel) re 8.4.2.5 CO art. 49 (CNO)
- 8.5.4.16 Edmonton (Providence) re 8.4.2.4 & 8.4.2.5 CO art. 49
- 8.5.4.17 Fergus (Maranatha) re CO art. 49
- 8.5.4.18 Fergus North re 8.4.2.4 & 8.4.2.5 CO art. 49
- 8.5.4.19 Grand Rapids re CO art. 49 (CNO, CCO)
- 8.5.4.20 Lincoln (Vineyard) re 8.4.2.4 & 8.4.2.5 CO art. 49
- 8.5.4.21 Neerlandia re CO art. 49
- 8.5.4.22 Niagara South re RSE CO art. 49
- 8.5.4.23 Orangeville re 8.4.2.4 CO art. 49 (CCO)
- 8.5.4.24 Orangeville re 8.4.2.5 CO art. 49 (CNO)
- 8.5.4.25 Ottawa (Jubilee) re 8.4.2.4 & 8.4.2.5 CO art. 49
- 8.5.4.26 Sardis re Overture re CO art. 49 (CNO, CCO)
- 8.5.4.27 St. Albert re 8.4.2.4 CO art. 49 (CCO)
- 8.5.4.28 St. Albert re 8.4.2.4 CO art. 49 (CNO)
- 8.5.4.29 Willoughby Heights re Overture re CO art. 49 (CNO, CCO)
- 8.5.4.30 Winnipeg (Redeemer) re Overture re CO art. 49 (CNO, CCO)
- 8.5.5 CO art. 55 (Overtures 8.4.2.2, 8.4.3.2, 8.4.3.3)
  - 8.5.5.1 Abbotsford (Pathway) re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.2 Ancaster re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.3 Ancaster re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55 Appendix 1
  - 8.5.5.4 Ancaster re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55 Appendix 2
  - 8.5.5.5 Ancaster re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55 Appendix 3
  - 8.5.5.6 Ancaster re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55 Appendix 4
  - 8.5.5.7 Ancaster re 8.4.3.2 on CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.8 Ancaster re 8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.9 Arthur re RSE re CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.10 Attercliffe re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.11 Barrhead re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.12 Brampton (Grace) re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.13 Burlington (Fellowship) re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.14 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.15 Caledonia re RSE re CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.16 Caledonia re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)
  - 8.5.5.17 Caledonia re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPW)
  - 8.5.5.18 Calgary re RSE re CO art. 55
  - 8.5.5.19 Calgary re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)

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- 8.5.5.20 Calgary re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPW)
- 8.5.5.21 Carman East re RSE re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.22 Carman East re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)
- 8.5.5.23 Carman East re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPW)
- 8.5.5.24 Carman West re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)
- 8.5.5.25 Carman West re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPW)
- 8.5.5.26 Chilliwack re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.27 Coaldale re RSE re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.28 Coaldale re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)
- 8.5.5.29 Coaldale re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPW)
- 8.5.5.30 Dunnville East re RSE re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.31 Dunnville West re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.32 Edmonton (Immanuel) re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.33 Edmonton (Providence) re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.34 Elm Creek re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)
- 8.5.5.35 Elm Creek re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPW)
- 8.5.5.36 Fergus (Maranatha) re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.37 Fergus North re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.38 Fergus North re 8.4.3.2 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.39 Fergus North re 8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.40 Flamborough (Redemption) re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.41 Grand Rapids re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.42 Grand Valley re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.43 Grassie (Covenant) re RSE re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.44 Grassie (Covenant) re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)
- 8.5.5.45 Grassie (Covenant) re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPW)
- 8.5.5.46 Guelph (Emmanuel) re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.47 Guelph (Living Word) re RSE re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.48 Hamilton (Cornerstone) re RSE re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.49 Hamilton (Cornerstone) re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)
- 8.5.5.50 Hamilton (Cornerstone) re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPW)
- 8.5.5.51 Hamilton (Providence) re RSE re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.52 Houston re RSE re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.53 Houston re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)
- 8.5.5.54 Houston re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPW)
- 8.5.5.55 Lincoln (Vineyard) re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.56 Kerwood re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.57 London (Pilgrim) re RSE CO art. 55

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- 8.5.5.58 Lynden re 8.4.2.2 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.59 Lynden re 8.4.3.2 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.60 Lynden re 8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.61 Neerlandia re CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.62 Niagara South re RSE CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.63 Niagara South re CPW CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.64 Nooksack Valley re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)
- 8.5.5.65 Orangeville re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.66 Ottawa (Jubilee) re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.67 Owen Sound re RSE CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.68 Sardis re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.69 Smithers (and Prince George (Messiah)) re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.70 Smithville re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.71 St. Albert re RSE CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.72 St. Albert re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPE)
- 8.5.5.73 St. Albert re RSW re CO art. 55 (CPW)
- 8.5.5.74 Toronto (Bethel) re RSE CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.75 Vernon re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.76 Willoughby Heights re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.77 Winnipeg (Grace) re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.5.78 Yarrow re 8.4.2.2/8.4.3.2/8.4.3.3 on CO art. 55
- 8.5.6 Duration of GS (Overture 8.4.2.3)
  - 8.5.6.1 Ancaster re RSE shortening of duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.2 Attercliffe re shortening of duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.3 Brampton (Grace) re shortening of duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.4 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re shortening of duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.5 Caledonia re shortening of duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.6 Calgary re shortening of duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.7 Carman West re CO art. 49 shortening duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.8 Chilliwack re CO art. 49 shortening duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.9 Coaldale re CO art. 49 shortening duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.10 Edmonton (Immanuel) re RSE shortening of duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.11 Edmonton (Providence) re RSE shortening of duration of GS
  - 8.5.6.12 Elm Creek re Duration of Synod - proposal 1 - hybrid model
  - 8.5.6.13 Elm Creek re Duration of Synod - proposal 2 - clerical support
  - 8.5.6.14 Fergus (Maranatha) re Duration of Synod - proposal 1 - hybrid model
  - 8.5.6.15 Fergus (Maranatha) re Duration of Synod - proposal 2 - clerical support

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- 8.5.6.16 Fergus North re shortening of duration of GS
- 8.5.6.17 Grand Rapids re CO art. 49 shortening duration of GS
- 8.5.6.18 Grassie (Covenant) re CO art. 49 shortening duration of GS - delegation
- 8.5.6.19 Grassie (Covenant) re CO art. 49 shortening duration of GS- hybrid model
- 8.5.6.20 Neerlandia re CO art. 49 shortening duration of GS
- 8.5.6.21 Niagara South re RSE shortening of duration of GS
- 8.5.6.22 Ottawa (Jubilee) re RSE shortening of duration of GS
- 8.5.6.23 Smithville re shortening of duration of GS
- 8.5.6.24 St. Albert re CO art. 49 shortening duration GS
- 8.5.6.25 Willoughby Heights re CO art. 49 shortening duration GS
- 8.5.7 Format Synod Acts (Overture 8.4.4) - none
- 8.5.8 Liturgical Forms: phrase “summarized in the confessions” (Overture 8.4.1.2)
  - 8.5.8.1 Ancaster re 8.4.1.2 amending questions
  - 8.5.8.2 Arthur re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.3 Attercliffe re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.4 Brampton (Grace) re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.5 Winnipeg (Redeemer) re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.6 Burlington (Ebenezer) re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.7 Burlington (Ebenezer) attachment letter to GS 1989
  - 8.5.8.8 Burlington (Fellowship) re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.9 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re 8.4.1.2 Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.10 Calgary re 8.4.1.2 amending questions
  - 8.5.8.11 Carman East re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.12 Carman West re 8.4.1.2 amending questions
  - 8.5.8.13 Chilliwack re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.14 Dunnville East re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.15 Edmonton (Immanuel) re 8.4.1.2 amending questions
  - 8.5.8.16 Fergus North re 8.4.1.2
  - 8.5.8.17 Grand Rapids re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.18 Grand Valley re 8.4.1.2 re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.19 Houston re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.20 Houston re 8.4.1.2 amending questions
  - 8.5.8.21 Kerwood re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.22 Langley re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.23 Niagara South re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.24 Orangeville re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.25 Ottawa (Jubilee) re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
  - 8.5.8.26 Sardis re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms

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- 8.5.8.27 Smithville re 8.4.1.2 re Liturgical Forms
- 8.5.8.28 Tintern Spring Creek re 8.4.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
- 8.5.8.29 Willoughby Heights re 8.4.1.1.2 Blessings re Liturgical Forms
- 8.5.9 Liturgical Forms: Infant Baptism (Overture 8.4.3.4)
  - 8.5.9.1 Arthur re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.2 Attercliffe re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.3 Barrhead re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.4 Calgary re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.5 Carman East re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.6 Coaldale re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.7 Dunnville West re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.8 Edmonton (Providence) re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.9 Fergus (Maranatha) re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.10 Flamborough (Redemption) re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.11 Houston re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.12 Kerwood re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.13 Langley re Liturgical form procedure
  - 8.5.9.14 Neerlandia re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.15 Niagara South re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.16 Ottawa (Jubilee) re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.17 St. Albert re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.18 Tintern Spring Creek re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.9.19 Willoughby Heights re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants
  - 8.5.8.20 Brampton (Grace) re 8.4.3.4 re Form for Baptism of Infants

## 8.6 APPEALS

- 8.6.1 re GS 2022 art. 105, Hymn Cap
  - 8.6.1.1 Brampton (Grace) Appeal re GS 2022 art. 105, hymn cap
  - 8.6.1.2 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) Appeal re GS 2022 art. 105, hymn cap
  - 8.6.1.3 Flamborough (Redemption) Appeal re GS 2022 art. 105, hymn cap
  - 8.6.1.4 Glanbrook (Trinity) Appeal re GS 2022 art. 105, hymn cap
  - 8.6.1.5 Sardis Appeal re GS2022 art. 105 hymn cap
  - 8.6.1.6 Toronto (Bethel) Appeal re GS 2022 art. 105, hymn cap Main
  - 8.6.1.7 Toronto (Bethel) Appeal re hymn cap Appx1 - Overture RSE 2020
  - 8.6.1.8 Toronto (Bethel) Appeal re hymn cap Appx2 – GS 2022 art. 105
  - 8.6.1.9 Vernon Appeal re GS 2022 art. 105 hymn cap
- 8.6.2 re GS 2022 art. 142, worship services on days of commemoration
  - 8.6.2.1 Dunnville West Appeal re GS 2022 art. 142 Worship services on days of commemoration

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- 8.6.3 re GS 2022 art. 155, Pulpit Access
  - 8.6.3.1 Burlington (Fellowship) re GS 2022 art. 155, Pulpit Access
  - 8.6.3.2 Coaldale Appeal re GS 2022 art. 155.4.4, Pulpit Access
  - 8.6.3.3 Ottawa (Jubilee) Appeal re GS 2022 art. 155, Pulpit Access
- 8.6.4 re GS 2022 art. 143 Preparatory Examinations by Classis
  - 8.6.4.1 Coaldale Appeal re GS 2022 art. 143 3.2 & 3.4, Preparatory Examination by Classis
- 8.6.5 re RSE 2021 art. 15 re CO art. 55
  - 8.6.5.1 Glanbrook (Trinity) Appeal re RSE 2021 art. 15, re CO art. 55
  - 8.6.5.2 Glanbrook (Trinity) Appeal re RSE 2021 art. 15, appendices
- 8.6.6 re GS 2022 art. 7 re Format of the Acts
  - 8.6.6.1 Chilliwack Appeal re GS 2022 art. 7 Format of the Acts
- 8.6.7 re GS 2022 art. 111, re SCBP modernization of language of hymns
  - 8.6.7.1 Flamborough (Redemption) Appeal re GS 2022 art. 111, modernization of language 3 hymns
- 8.6.8 Confidential Appeals
  - 8.6.8.1 Appeal re GS 2022 (confidential acts) art.60 & 81 (Willoughby Heights)
  - 8.6.8.2 Personal Appeal (confidential)
  - 8.6.8.3 email re confidential appeals
  - 8.6.8.4 Personal Appeal (confidential)
  - 8.6.8.5 Personal Appeal (confidential)
  - 8.6.8.6 Letter regarding appeal (confidential)
  - 8.6.8.7 letter regarding confidential appeals
  - 8.6.8.8 letter from the Correspondence Committee Aldergrove CONFIDENTIAL
- 8.6.9 Personal Appeal
  - 8.6.9.1 incl. 13 attachments to the above
- 8.6.10 Appeal of GS 2022 art. 108 re length of appointments
  - 8.6.10.1 Ancaster re GS 2022 art. 108, re length of appointments
- 8.6.11 Appeal of GS 2019 art. 23 and GS 2022 art. 120
  - 8.6.11.1 Kerwood re Lord's Supper forms

## 9 APPOINTMENTS

- 9.1 Board of Governors CRTS (BoG) Academic and Finance & Property Committees
  - 9.1.1 Nominations from RSE
  - 9.1.2 Nominations from RSW
  - 9.1.3 Nominations for Finance & Property Committee
- 9.2 CPTPF - Committee for Pastoral Training Funding
- 9.3 CER - Committee on Ecumenical Relations
  - 9.3.1 CER Nominations for appointments

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- 9.4 SCBP - Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*
  - 9.4.1 SCBP Nominations for appointments
- 9.5 CBT - Committee on Bible Translations
- 9.6 CWeb - Committee for the Official Website
  - 9.6.1 CWeb - Nomination for appointment
- 9.7 CNSF - Committee for the Needy Students' Fund
- 9.8 Churches for Days of Prayer ad CO art. 54
  - 9.8.1 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re Appointment re CO art. 54
- 9.9 General Fund
- 9.10 Financial Review of the General Fund
- 9.11 Archive Church
- 9.12 The Church for inspecting the Archives
  - 9.12.1 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re Inspection of Archives of GS
- 9.13 Financial Review of GS 2025
- 9.14 Address Church
- 9.15 Committee for Publication of the Acts
- 9.16 Convening Church for the next General Synod

- 10 CENSURE AD ARTICLE 34 CO
- 11 FINANCIAL MATTERS
- 12 PREPARATION FOR NEXT GENERAL SYNOD
  - 12.1 Aldergrove re preparation considerations and recommendations
- 13 ADOPTION OF THE ACTS
- 14 APPROVAL OF THE PRESS RELEASE
- 15 CLOSING

Upon a motion by Br. Boot and seconded by Rev. den Hollander the agenda was

**ADOPTED**

*See also GS 2025 art. 22.*

**Article 10 – Advisory Committees**

The following advisory committees were appointed:

**Committee 1:**

Marc Jagt (convenor), Don Aasman, Joe Poppe, John Jager, James Teitsma

Materials: SCBP Report re musical section of *Book of Praise* (8.2.8), Overtures re CO 55

(8.4.2.2, 8.4.3.2, 8.4.3.3), Procedure re matters pertaining to CO 55 (8.1.10), Appeal re CO 55 (8.6.5), Appeals re Hymn Cap (8.6.1), Appeal re Hymn Language (8.6.7).

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**Committee 2:**

Rolf den Hollander (convenor), Gerald Boot, Hilmer Jagersma, Lyndon Kok, Adam van den Hoven

Materials: Interchurch Relations (8.2.10, 8.1.1), Appeals re Guest Preachers (8.6.3), Overture re Ecclesiastical Route (8.4.3.1).

**Committee 3:**

Ken Wieske (convenor), Ron Bremer, John Harsevoort, Bill van Beek, Carl Van Dam.

Materials: Board of Governors / CRTS (8.2.6), Committee for Needy Theological Students (8.2.4), Committee for Pastoral Training Program (8.2.7), Appeal re Preparatory Examinations (8.6.4), 6<sup>th</sup> professor (8.3.6), SCBP Report re prose sections of *Book of Praise* & General Mandates (8.2.8, 8.1.9), Appeal re Lord's Supper Forms (8.6.11), Overture re Apostles' Creed Footnote (8.4.2.1), Overture re phrase "summarized in the confessions" in some Liturgical Forms (8.4.1), Overture re Form for Infant Baptism (8.4.3.4).

**Committee 4:**

Hendrik Alkema (convenor), Richard Buist, Ken Hoeksma, Andy Jairam, Jake Torenvliet.

Materials: Appeals re GS 2022 confidential acts (8.6.8), Overtures re CO 49 (8.4.2.4, 8.4.2.5), Overture re Duration of Synod (8.4.2.3), Appeal re Days of Commemoration (8.6.2).

**Committee 5 (executive):**

John Louwerse (convenor), Rob Schouten, Karlo Janssen, Peter Holtvliwer.

Materials: Format of Acts (8.1.2-6, 8.4.4, 8.6.6), GS 2022 reports (8.2.1), Archives (8.2.2), Days of Prayer (8.2.3), Website (8.2.5), Bible Translation (8.2.9), Address Church (8.2.11), General Fund (8.2.12), GS 2028 preparations (12), Appointments (8.4.5, 8.6.10), Personal Appeal (8.6.9), Election of Synod Officers (8.1.7), Housekeeping Matters (8.1.8), Retention of Material (8.1.14), Financial Terminology and Reports (8.3.1, 8.3.2).

**Article 11 – Fraternal delegates and observers**

A welcome was extended to a fraternal delegate and a fraternal observer who had arrived in the course of the day. The Chairman read out the decision of GS 2022 (art. 108 dec. 3.7) regarding the rights and privileges of fraternal delegates and observers. He noted that this evening session will focus on fraternal relations and will be livestreamed.

*Following some further comments from the Chairman and the First Clerk regarding procedures, Synod was adjourned for committee work.*

**Day 1 — Evening Session**

**Tuesday, May 6, 2025**

**Article 12 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session at 7:00pm. The Chairman had the meeting sing Psalm 111:1. He observed that all Synod members were present. He extended a special welcome to fraternal delegates, audience, and those on livestream, and noted that the business of this session would be fraternal relations.

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## Article 13 – GK (Reformed Churches [The Netherlands])

### 1. Material

- 1.1 Letter from the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN) confirming request to enter into sister church relationship (Jan. 18, 2024) (8.1.1).
- 1.2 CER Report 19: Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK) (8.2.10.19).
- 1.3 CER Supplementary Report (8.2.10.26).
- 1.4 Letter from Fergus (Maranatha) (8.3.10.26).

### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The reports were declared admissible.  
Grounds: They were mandated by the previous synod and were received on time.
- 2.2 The letter was declared admissible.  
Grounds: It interacts with a report to GS 2025 and was received on time.

### 3. Observations

#### 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 148) observed:

- [4.1] The Reformed Churches (DGK) display the marks of the true church of Jesus Christ in their preaching, worship, and governance.

#### 3.2 GS 2022 (art. 148) mandated the CER:

- [3.1] To maintain contact with The Reformed Churches (DGK);
- [3.2] To express gratitude for how the DGK is dealing with the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA).
- [3.3] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.3.1] To continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to:
    - [3.3.1.1] The relationship between the DGK and the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN);
    - [3.3.1.2] The relationship between the DGK and the LRCA;
  - [3.3.2] To be available for dialogue with the DGK;
  - [3.3.3] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### 3.3 GS 2022 (art. 149) observed:

- [4.1] The Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN) display the marks of the true church of Jesus Christ in their preaching, worship, and governance.

#### 3.4 GS 2022 (art. 149) mandated the CER:

- [3.1] To maintain contact with the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN);
- [3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.2.1] To continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to:
    - [3.2.1.1] The relationship between the GKN and The Reformed Churches (DGK);

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- [3.2.2] To be available for dialogue with the GKN;
- [3.2.2] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

### 3.5 The CER Report observes:

- 3.5.1 The impediments to entering into sister church relations with The Reformed Churches (DGK) and the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN) are the continued separation of the DGK and the GKN and the DGK relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA).
- 3.5.2 The Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK) still had to take decisions regarding ecumenical relations. It is likely that the request for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) made by the GKN to the CanRC will remain.
- 3.5.3 Prior to the merger, the DGK decided by a majority vote to discontinue its relationship with the LRCA.
- 3.5.4 The CER delegated Rev. Janssen to attend the events marking the merger of the DGK and the GKN on October 4, 2024, and the concurrent extraordinary synods the following day.

- 3.6 The CER Report 19 recommends that Synod establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK) under the adopted rules;
- 3.7 The Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN) letter says, “on December 2, 2023, synod Kampen 2023 decided to recognize the churches of De Gereformeerde Kerken {DGK} as churches of Christ standing on the foundation of apostles and prophets ... As soon as the synod of DGK has made the same decision with regard to the GKN, the churches of DGK and GKN will be in a state of union and will work towards one church body.”

## 4. Considerations

- 4.1 All impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship, identified by previous CanRC synods no longer exist. Namely:
  - 4.1.1 The Reformed Churches (DGK) has discontinued the sister church relationship with Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA);
  - 4.1.2 The desired merger between the DGK and the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN) to form the Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK) was confirmed on Oct 4, 2024.
- 4.2 The DGK agreed to honor the sister church relationships of the GKN (cf. GS 2024 DGK art. 3 C.7);
- 4.3 The relationship CanRC-GK is in essence a continuation of the relationships CanRC-DGK and CanRC-GKN and, as such, in many ways a continuation of the relationship CanRC-GKv.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

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- 5.1 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).
- 5.2 To establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK) under the adopted rules.
- 5.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.3.1 To convey this decision to the Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK) as soon as possible;
  - 5.3.2 As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions to promote ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in The Netherlands;
  - 5.3.3 To submit its report to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED** unanimously.

#### **Article 14 – GK – Fraternal Delegate Address**

Rev. Karlo Janssen introduced Rev. Rik Douma, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK). Rev. Douma addressed Synod and provided an overview of the GK. He expressed gratitude for the newly established sister-church relationship. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 2. The Chairman spoke some words in response. Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer led in a prayer of thanksgiving and the assembly sang Psalm 124.

#### **Article 15 – FCC – Letter of Greetings**

Rev. Karlo Janssen read a letter of greeting sent by the Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCC), declaring gratitude for our relationship and expressing regret at being unable to attend Synod in person. The full text of the letter can be found in Appendix 3. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

#### **Article 16 – GGRCI – Fraternal Delegate Address**

Rev. Carl Van Dam introduced Rev. Yonson Dethan, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI). Rev. Dethan addressed Synod and provided an overview of the GGRCI. He expressed gratitude for our sister-church relationship but wondered if our relationship could be more fruitful with a view to the spread of the gospel in Indonesia. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 4. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

#### **Article 17 – RCUS – Fraternal Delegate Address**

Rev. Marc Jagt introduced Rev. Travis Grassmid, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS). Rev. Grassmid addressed Synod and provided an overview of the RCUS. He expressed gratitude for our sister-church relationship. He explained how the RCUS will be celebrating its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary this summer. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 5. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

### **Article 18 – RCNZ – Fraternal Delegate Address**

Rev. Carl Van Dam introduced Rev. David Stares, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ). Rev. Stares addressed Synod and provided an overview of the RCNZ. He expressed gratitude for our sister-church relationship, noting how the RCNZ has received two graduates from CRTS in recent years, and the transfer of members. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 6. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

### **Article 19 – OPC – Fraternal Delegate Address**

Rev. Karlo Janssen introduced Rev. Robert Tarullo, credentialed delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Rev. Tarullo addressed Synod and provided an overview of the OPC. He expressed gratitude for our sister-church relationship, describing various ways in which we work together. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 7. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

### **Article 20 – Closing Devotions**

Rev. Rolf den Hollander read John 21:15-19, led in prayer, remembering the FCC, GGRCI, RCUS, RCNZ, and OPC. The day was closed with the singing of Hymn 56.

*Synod was adjourned until 9:00am.*

### **Day 2 — Morning Session** **Wednesday, May 7, 2025**

### **Article 21 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session at 9:00am. The Chairman observed that all synod members were present. He read Psalm 87, spoke some devotional words, led in opening prayer, and had the meeting sing Psalm 87:1,2,4.

### **Article 22 – Final Agenda adopted**

A rearranged and renumbered version of the agenda was adopted as the final agenda for GS 2025.

### **Article 23 – Appeals against GS 2022 art. 60 & 81**

Synod went into closed session.

Committee 4 presented draft 1 of a report on the admissibility of an appeal by the Willoughby Heights CanRC against GS 2022 art. 60 and 81. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

At the request of Committee 4, a number of rounds of discussion regarding confidential appeals took place.

Synod returned to open session.

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**Article 24 – Ruling re Application of CO art. 32**

Given the foregoing discussion reported in Article 23 (above), the Chairman made the following ruling, identical to that of GS 2019 art. 39, regarding the application of CO art. 32.

A delegate should abstain if:

1. a matter particularly involves his person or his church (CO article 32);
2. a matter pertains to the Board of Governors and he is a member of the Board (on account of his legal context);
3. a matter pertains to the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* and he is a member of the Committee (on account of his legal context);

A delegate has freedom to vote or abstain but is encouraged to keep the spirit of CO art. 32 in mind when:

4. he was a member of a minor assembly which previously decided regarding a matter being appealed;

A delegate has freedom to vote even though:

5. he was a member of a committee reporting to synod (e.g. CER).

A simple majority constitutes more than half of the votes cast, not counting the abstentions.

*Synod was adjourned for committee work.*

**Day 2 — Afternoon Session**  
**Wednesday, May 7, 2025**

**Article 25 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session at 2:00pm. The Chairman observed that all synod members were present. He had the meeting sing Hymn 6:1,2.

**Article 26 – Overtures RSE 2024 and RSW 2024 re CO art. 55 (*Songs*) – admissibility**

Committee 1 presented draft 1 of a report on the CO 55 overtures, seeking advice and direction regarding admissibility. The report was discussed. The committee took the matter back for further consideration.

**Article 27 – Worship Service Songs – Procedure**

Committee 1 presented an action plan, seeking advice and direction regarding the order in which various matters on Synod's agenda regarding songs sung during worship services should be discussed. The action plan was discussed and agreed to.

**Article 28 – Overtures RSE 2024 and RSW 2024 re CO art. 55 (*Songs*) – substance**

At the request of Committee 1, an orientational round on the overtures regarding CO art. 55 took place.

*Following some comments regarding housekeeping matters, Synod adjourned for committee work.*

**Day 2 — Evening Session**  
**Wednesday, May 7, 2025**

**Article 29 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session at 7:00pm. The Chairman extended a welcome to all present in the building and online via the livestream. He had the meeting sing Psalm 108:1. He observed that all synod members were present.

**Article 30 – URCNA – Fraternal Delegate Address**

Rev. Karlo Janssen introduced Rev. Jason Vander Horst, credentialed delegate of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). Rev. Vander Horst addressed Synod and provided an overview of the URCNA. He expressed gratitude for our sister-church relationship, expressed in so many ways, noting that our “*Phase 2*” relationship looks to what comes next. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 8. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

**Article 31 – ERQ – Fraternal Delegate Address**

Rev. Marc Jagt introduced Rev. Blaise Tsabang, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Church in Quebec (ERQ). Rev. Tsabang addressed Synod and provided an overview of the ERQ, noting the challenges faced by the congregations. He expressed gratitude for our sister-church relationship. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 9. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

**Article 32 – ARPC – Fraternal Observer Address**

Rev. Marc Jagt introduced Rev. Aaron De Boer, credentialed delegate of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC). Rev. De Boer addressed Synod and provided an overview of the ARPC. He expressed gratitude for our relationship. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 10. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

**Article 33 – FCS – Letter of Greetings**

Rev. Karlo Janssen read a letter of greeting sent by the Free Church of Scotland (FCS), declaring gratitude for our relationship. The full text of the letter can be found in Appendix 11. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

**Article 34 – Address Church**

**1. Material**

1.1 Report of the Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC (8.2.11.1).

**2. Admissibility**

2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

2.2 The letters were declared admissible.

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Grounds: They interact with a report to GS 2025 and were received on time.

### 3. Observations

3.1 GS 2022 (art. 30) appointed the Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC to serve as the Address Church and decided:

[3.3] To mandate the Address Church to report to the churches on its activities six months prior to the next general synod.

3.2 The Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC served as the Address Church of the CanRC during the inter-synodical period.

3.3 The Address Church submitted a brief report to GS 2025.

### 4. Consideration

4.1 The Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC has fulfilled its responsibilities as Address Church with appropriate diligence.

### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To receive with thankfulness the report from the Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC;
- 5.2 To thank the Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC for its willingness to continue serving as the Address Church of General Synod;
- 5.3 To mandate the Address Church to submit a report on its activities to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

## ADOPTED

### Article 35 – Archives

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC re Archives (8.2.2.2).
- 1.2 Report of the Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC re Inspection of the Archives (8.2.2.1).
- 1.3 Letter from the Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC re appointment (9.12.1).

#### 2. Admissibility

2.1 The reports were declared admissible.

Grounds: They were mandated by the previous synod and were received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 The Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC submitted a report confirming that the archives of GS 2022 have been properly filed and catalogued, and that it has fulfilled its role as the Archive Church for general synods.
- 3.2 The Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC submitted a report confirming that it has inspected the archives and found the original documents to be in good order.
- 3.3 Burlington (Rehoboth) has also communicated that due to an impending merger with Burlington (Ebenezer), it will no longer be able to serve as the Inspecting Church. It

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recommends that another church in the vicinity—specifically the Burlington (Fellowship) CanRC—be appointed to take on this task going forward.

3.4 Burlington (Ebenezer) notes a discrepancy in GS 2022 art. 29 regarding the deadline for archive reporting. One part of the article stipulates submission “six weeks” prior to Synod, while the mandate section calls for submission “six months” prior. The Archive Church asks Synod to update the mandate to reflect the decision.

#### **4. Considerations**

- 4.1 The Archive Church and Inspecting Church have fulfilled their mandates with diligence and care.
- 4.2 The request to clarify the reporting deadline is appropriate but it is unclear if the error in GS 2022 art. 29 is found in the portion called “decision” (6 weeks prior to GS) or in “mandate” (6 months prior to GS). GS 2025 considers that since most other appointed committees (or churches) are mandated to report to GS six months prior, and since there is no apparent reason for the Archive Church or the Inspecting Church to wait till six weeks prior to synod, a deadline of six months prior to synod is most appropriate.
- 4.3 With the Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC no longer able to serve as Inspecting Church and in view of its recommendation, it is fitting to appoint the Burlington (Fellowship) CanRC to this role.
- 4.4 The Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC has completed its responsibilities with respect to the archival care of the Acts and documents of GS 2022 and should be formally discharged of that task.

#### **5. Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To receive with thankfulness the reports from the Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC (Archive Church) and the Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC (Inspecting Church).
- 5.2 To thank the Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC for its many years of faithful service in inspecting the archives.
- 5.3 To acknowledge that the Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC has completed its responsibilities as Archive Church with respect to GS 2022, and to discharge it of that task with gratitude.
- 5.4 To mandate the Archive Church and the inspecting church to submit their respective reports no later than six (6) months prior to GS 2028.

*The mandate can be found in Appendix 20.*

#### **ADOPTED**

### **Article 36 – CBT (Bible Translations)**

#### **1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Bible Translations (CBT) (8.2.9.1).
- 1.2 Letter from the Calgary CanRC (8.3.9.1).

## 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

- 2.2 The letter was declared admissible.

Grounds: It interacts with a report to GS 2025 and was received on time.

## 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 158) mandated the CBT:

[3.5.1] To solicit, receive, and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV.

[3.5.2] To submit worthy translation suggestions to the ESV editorial committee.

[3.5.3] To serve as a resource for Bible translation matters.

[3.5.4] To validate and submit expenses to the treasurer of the General Fund.

[3.5.5] To submit a report to the churches six months prior to the next General Synod.

- 3.2 The CBT consists of Rev. Jeff Poort and Rev. Tyler Vandergaag. No new appointments are needed at this time.

- 3.3 The CBT sent a letter to all churches in August 2023, inviting feedback on the ESV and offering to serve as a translation resource.

- 3.4 Two churches responded:

3.4.1 One raised general concerns about the readability of the ESV.

3.4.2 Another submitted detailed comments on specific texts. The CBT appreciated the exegesis but did not find that the comments warranted forwarding to the ESV editorial team.

- 3.5 The ESV editorial committee reportedly met in July 2024, but no new edition or public update has been released as of the writing of this report.

- 3.6 The CBT has fulfilled its mandate without incurring any notable expenses.

- 3.7 The Calgary CanRC submitted a letter in response to the CBT report. While expressing appreciation for the CBT's work, Calgary questioned whether it remains beneficial to renew mandate items 1.1 and 1.2, given the February 11, 2025 update from Crossway. They also proposed adding a mandate to evaluate the World English Bible (WEB), a copyright-free translation available in the public domain.

## 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The CBT has faithfully carried out its mandate and remains available to serve the churches on matters of Bible translation.

- 4.2 Although public updates to the ESV have been limited, the Crossway document referenced by the Calgary CanRC (February 2025) indicates that changes to the ESV are being implemented and does not preclude further revisions. Therefore, maintaining communication and a posture of readiness to engage remains appropriate.

- 4.3 The churches have shown only limited engagement with the CBT. Renewing the current mandate continues to provide the churches with a structured channel for interaction and support.

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- 4.4 Calgary's proposal to evaluate the World English Bible has been noted. However, no compelling rationale has been provided for expanding the CBT's mandate in that direction at this time.
- 4.5 The CBT has functioned efficiently without expense and continues to provide a stable and useful service to the churches.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To thank the Committee for Bible Translations (CBT) for its faithful service to the churches.
- 5.2 To mandate the CBT:
  - 5.2.1 To solicit, receive, and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV;
  - 5.2.2 To submit worthy translation suggestions to the ESV editorial committee;
  - 5.2.3 To serve the churches as a resource for Bible translation matters;
  - 5.2.4 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;
  - 5.2.5 To prepare and distribute a report to the churches six (6) months in advance of the next general synod.

## ADOPTED

### Article 37 – CWeb (Official Website)

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for the Official Website (CWeb) (8.2.5.1).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 44) mandated the Committee for the Official Website (CWeb) to maintain and update the federation website and email infrastructure, provide English translations of historic Dutch Acts, and serve as administrators of the minister email list.
- 3.2 GS 2022 (art. 30 dec. 3.2) also instructed the CWeb to use the canrc.org website to direct appropriate correspondence to the Address Church.
- 3.3 The CWeb reported that:
  - 3.3.1 It has continued regular maintenance of the website, including content updates and posting of news items.
  - 3.3.2 Minor technical improvements have been made, including better formatting for press releases and background improvements for efficiency.
  - 3.3.3 It is testing a new control panel to allow churches to update their own information.

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- 3.3.4 Email forwarding via Mailgun is functioning well, though spam remains a challenge.
- 3.3.5 The minister email list (via Gaggle Mail) is functioning effectively.
- 3.3.6 Help desk software (Help Scout) has been adopted and is proving helpful for team-based correspondence.
- 3.3.7 Translation work on the Acts of Synod 1954, 1958, 1962, and 1965 is ongoing, with the 1965 Acts near publication and the others in progress.
- 3.3.8 A new committee member will be needed to replace br. Jonathan Reinink.

3.4 The CWeb requests:

- 3.4.1 Clarification regarding compensation for translation work.
- 3.4.2 Approval of a \$10,900 budget for 2025–2028, covering hosting, email, and help desk expenses.
- 3.4.3 Additional funding for translation work.
- 3.4.4 Renewal of its existing mandate.

3.5 There is no mention in the CWeb's report of it directing appropriate correspondence to the Address Church.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The CWeb has faithfully and effectively executed its mandate, ensuring the continued functionality and improvement of the federation's digital infrastructure.
- 4.2 The ongoing translation project is a valuable service to the churches and merits continued support.
- 4.3 While the CWeb requests additional funds for this translation work, it would have been helpful for the committee to propose a specific amount.
- 4.4 The proposed general budget and continuation of the current mandate are reasonable and appropriate.
- 4.5 Appointing a new member will ensure continued stability and effectiveness of the CWeb's work.
- 4.6 Since Synod 2022 (art. 30, dec. 3.2) instructed the CWeb to use the canrc.org website to direct correspondence to the Address Church, it is appropriate to include in the CWeb's mandate a corresponding responsibility to enable this functionality on the federation website.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To thank the Committee for the Official Website (CWeb) for its diligent work in maintaining and improving the federation's digital and email infrastructure.
- 5.2 To approve the proposed budget of \$10,900 for the 2025–2028 period, to cover ongoing hosting, email forwarding, minister email list, and help desk software expenses.
- 5.3 To approve additional funds up to a maximum of \$7,500 from the General Fund for the translation of the Acts of Synod 1954, 1958, 1962, and 1965, and to instruct the committee to coordinate with the Church for the General Fund and/or treasurer in establishing appropriate compensation arrangements.

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- 5.4 To renew the CWeb's mandate with the following tasks:
  - 5.4.1 To maintain the existing website and associated technical functions.
  - 5.4.2 To revise the content of the website as needed, including:
    - 5.4.2.1 Posting news items and official documents.
    - 5.4.2.2 Annual auditing of site content against the yearbook.
    - 5.4.2.3 Maintaining synodical committee pages with up-to-date information.
    - 5.4.2.4 Posting synod reports prior to the next general synod.
  - 5.4.3 To make available English translations of the Acts of Synod 1954, 1958, 1962, and 1965, and to submit related expenses to the General Fund.
  - 5.4.4 To provide email forwarding from @canrc.org addresses upon request.
  - 5.4.5 To administer the minister email list.
  - 5.4.6 To validate and submit all committee expenses to the treasurer of the General Fund.
  - 5.4.7 To report to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the next general synod.
  - 5.4.8 To use the canrc.org website to direct appropriate correspondence to the Address Church, in accordance with the decision of GS 2022 (art. 30 dec.3.2).
- 5.5 To appoint a new member to the CWeb to replace br. Jonathan Reinink and to receive the nomination under separate cover.

## ADOPTED

### Article 38 – Days of Prayer

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC and the Edmonton (Providence) CanRC responsible for calling Days of Prayer (CO art. 54 (8.2.3.1)).
- 1.2 Letters from: Grassie (Covenant) (8.3.3.1), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) (9.8.1).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.  
Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.
- 2.2 The letters were declared admissible.  
Grounds: They interact with a report to GS 2025 and were received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 31) appointed Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) and Edmonton (Providence) to proclaim Days of Prayer as per CO art. 54.
- 3.2 These appointed churches report that no Day of Prayer was proclaimed during their term. They received three requests (from Cloverdale, Ancaster, and Grassie (Covenant)), all of which were declined on the grounds that the matters raised did not meet the threshold of a “general calamity or other great affliction” as outlined in CO art. 54 and interpreted in GS 2004 art. 40.

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- 3.3 The churches explained that a Day of Prayer is not intended for general ecclesiastical reflection or unity but is meant to be a response to acute and immediate crises with direct impact on the churches or nation.
- 3.4 Grassie (Covenant) submitted a letter to GS 2025 expressing concern that the current application of CO art. 54 may be too narrow. They argue that biblically, days of prayer often precede calamity and are acts of priestly intercession on behalf of the nation. They suggest that legislative changes (e.g., Bill C-4) are, in themselves, spiritual calamities that may warrant a Day of Prayer.
- 3.5 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) reports that it is in the process of merging with Burlington (Ebenezer) and suggests that the responsibility for proclaiming Days of Prayer be transferred to the merged entity, with the consent of Ebenezer's council.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The churches appointed under CO art. 54 acted within the scope of their mandate, using precedent from previous synods and the clear language of CO art. 54 to guide their decisions.
- 4.2 While letter of Grassie (Covenant) reflects a commendable zeal for prayer and national repentance, it expands the intent of CO art. 54 beyond what the Church Order appears to contemplate. Nonetheless, Grassie raises a valid question regarding whether our current interpretation of "general calamities and other great afflictions" should remain as stringent as defined in 2004.
- 4.3 Synod notes the good cooperation between Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) and Burlington (Ebenezer) councils in planning for the continuity of this task post-merger. There is no need to appoint a new church if Synod reaffirms the task to the Rehoboth church with the understanding that it will transfer seamlessly to the merged church.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To thank the Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC and the Edmonton (Providence) CanRC for their faithful execution of their mandate under CO art. 54.

#### ADOPTED

#### Article 39 – CER (Ecumenical Relations): General Mandate

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on the Report 1: General Mandate of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

#### Article 40 – CRTS (Board of Governors): Sixth Professor

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on a letter from the Toronto (Bethel) CanRC re considering the appointment of a sixth professor at CRTS (Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration. (See further, GS 2025 art. 154.)

### **Article 41 – Closing Devotions**

Rev. Hilmer Jagersma read Philippians 1:3-11, led in prayer, remembering URCNA, ERQ, ARPC, and FCS. The day was closed with the singing of Hymn 78.

*Synod was adjourned until 9:00am.*

### **Day 3 — Morning Session**

**Thursday, May 8, 2025**

### **Article 42 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman observed that all synod members were present. He read Psalm 2, spoke some devotional words, led in opening prayer, and had the meeting sing Psalm 2.

### **Article 43 – Adoption of Acts; Publication of GS 2025 art. 10**

The prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected. It was determined that a second review of these acts would be done prior to adoption.

It was decided that the composition of the Advisory Committees (GS 2025 art. 10) would not be made public until after General Synod was ended.

*Synod was adjourned for committee work.*

### **Day 3 — Evening Session**

**Thursday, May 8, 2025**

### **Article 44 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session at 7:00pm. The Chairman extended a welcome to all present in the building and online via the livestream. He had the meeting sing Hymn 4. He observed that all synod members were present.

### **Article 45 – RPCNA – Fraternal Observer Address**

Rev. Marc Jagt introduced Rev. Johnathan Kruis, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). Rev. Kruis addressed Synod describing the RPCNA, explaining, among other things, the functioning of *The Testimony* and the practice of female deacons. He expressed gratitude for our relationship. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 12. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

The Chairman also spoke some words of farewell to a fraternal delegate who would be leaving during the course of this session.

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**Article 46 – CER (Ecumenical Relations): General Mandate****1. Material**

- 1.1 CER Report 1 – General Mandate (8.2.10.1), Nominations (9.3.1).
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Ancaster (8.3.10.1), Grand Rapids (8.3.10.10).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.  
Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.
- 2.2 The letters were declared admissible.  
Grounds: They interact with a report to GS 2025 and were received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 121 dec. 3.5) mandated the CER:
  - a) To continue contact with churches with whom we are in ecumenical relations;
  - b) To send an appropriate number of delegates to represent the CanRC churches at the meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) and North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC);
  - c) To work in consultation with individual CanRC churches and classes that maintain contact with churches for which the CER also has a mandate;
  - d) Upon request, to advise CanRC churches regarding the identity of other churches and our relationship with them;
  - e) To report on any contact with a church with whom we are not in an ecumenical relationship;
  - f) To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;
  - g) To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of general synod (a supplementary report can be submitted if necessary);
  - h) To facilitate hospitality support for fraternal delegates and observers, in consultation with the Convening Church, at each general synod.

- 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 The CER completed its mandate with the involvement of Br. Bos (ERQ, GGRCI, GGRI, GGRI-T), Br. Bouwman (NAPARC, RPCNA, FCC, FCS), Br. De Boer (DGK, FRCA, GKN), Br. Gortemaker (IRB, RCUS), Br. Schouten (URCNA, IRB, RCNZ), Rev. Bruintjes (ARPC, FRCSA, KPCA, KPCK), Rev. Jagt (KPCA, KPCK, FRCNA, HRCNA, NAPARC), Rev. Janssen (FRCNA, HRCNA, ICRC, DGK, GKN), Rev. Pol (ERQ, GGRCI, GGRI, GGRI-T), Rev. Temple (FRCSA, ARPC, ICRC, OPC), Rev. Van Dam (FCC, FCS, OPC, FRCA), Rev. Vandervelde (RCNZ, RCUS, RPCNA, URCNA);
- 3.2.2 The terms of Br. G. Bos and Br. O. Bouwman end with GS 2025. Also retiring from the CER is Rev. S.C. Van Dam;
- 3.2.3 The CER met 14 times noting that the merging of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (of the CanRC) (CCCNA) and the Committee for

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Relations with Churches Abroad (of the CanRC) (CRCA) has worked very profitably;

- 3.2.4 In the execution of their mandate there has been interaction with churches outside their mandate, notably the Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE);
- 3.2.5 Br. Schouten was appointed to validate and submit expenses to the treasurer of the General Fund;
- 3.2.6 The CER should ideally consist of 6 ministers and 6 non-ministers;
- 3.2.7 Half the members are due to retire in 2028.

3.3 The CER recommends:

- 3.3.1 Synod decide to give the CER the following general mandate:
  - 3.3.1.1 To continue contact with churches with whom we are in ecumenical relations according to the adopted rules;
  - 3.3.1.2 To convey the relevant decisions of general synods to churches with whom we have an ecumenical relation;
  - 3.3.1.3 To work in consultation with individual CanRC churches and classes that maintain contact with churches for which the CER also has a mandate;
  - 3.3.1.4 Upon request, to advise CanRC churches regarding the identity of other churches and our relationship with them;
  - 3.3.1.5 To report on any contact with a church with whom we are not in an ecumenical relationship;
  - 3.3.1.6 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;
  - 3.3.1.7 To submit its report on the general mandate to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of general synod (a supplementary report can be submitted if necessary);
  - 3.3.1.8 To facilitate hospitality support for fraternal delegates and observers, in consultation with the convening church, at the next general synod.
- 3.4 The Grand Rapids ARC states that almost all the contacts and discussions took place in the context of either NAPARC and ICRC meetings and wonders if the sort of substantive discussions that on-going ecumenical contact requires can be held in that context.
- 3.5 The Ancaster CanRC asks what precisely the standing is of theological students from outside the CanRC who study at CRTS and are thus members of the CanRC, and who are licensed to preach among the churches of their federation of origin. Ancaster requests that this matter be included in some appropriate place in the mandate of the CER, work then be made of it and then reported to the churches ahead of GS 2028. They provide a proposal for implementing this.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The CER has fulfilled their mandate.

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- 4.2 The Grand Rapids ARC misunderstands the work of the CER delegates. At NAPARC and ICRC meetings, delegates of the various interchurch relationship committees will hold bi-lateral meetings, in addition to the plenary sessions. Further, fraternal delegates are regularly sent to the various assemblies.
- 4.3 The Ancaster CanRC correctly notes that theological students are not included in the current rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF).

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To thank Br. G. Bos, Br. O. Bouwman and Rev. S.C. Van Dam for their years of service to the churches;
- 5.2 To give the CER the following general mandate:
  - 5.2.1 To continue contact with churches with whom we are in ecumenical relations according to the adopted rules;
  - 5.2.2 To convey the relevant decisions of general synods to churches with whom we have an ecumenical relation;
  - 5.2.3 To work in consultation with individual CanRC churches and classes that maintain contact with churches for which the CER also has a mandate;
  - 5.2.4 Upon request, to advise CanRC churches regarding the identity of other churches and our relationship with them;
  - 5.2.5 To report on any contact with a church with whom we are not in an ecumenical relationship;
  - 5.2.6 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;
  - 5.2.7 To submit its report on the general mandate to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of general synod (a supplementary report can be submitted if necessary);
  - 5.2.8 To facilitate hospitality support for fraternal delegates and observers, in consultation with the Convening Church, at the next general synod;
  - 5.2.9 To pursue the proposal provided by the Ancaster CanRC (included in Appendix 21) and come with recommendations to the next general synod for how theological students may be included in the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF).

## ADOPTED

During proceedings, the following motion to amend was duly made and seconded:

In 5.2.9 to replace the words

“how theological students are to be included”

With

“how theological students may be included”

This motion was adopted.

## **Article 47 – CER (Ecumenical Relations): Study Mandate CO art. 50 & ER Rules**

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on Report 2: Study Mandate of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

## **Article 48 – RPCNA (Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America)**

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on Report 10: RPCNA of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

## **Article 49 – OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church)**

### **1. Material**

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 8: Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) – Agenda Item (8.2.10.8).

### **2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

### **3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 164) mandated the CER:

- [3.1] To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) under the adopted rules;
- [3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) to submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

- 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 Continued engagement with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), including attendance at its General Assembly;
- 3.2.2 “At this time, there has been a long and fruitful relationship between the CanRC and the OPC;”
- 3.2.3 “Over the past number of years, our delegates have worked very closely within the context of the ICRC. This was particularly the case as the CanRC and OPC stood together, and worked together, in navigating the challenge of terminating the GKv’s membership in the ICRC.”

- 3.3 The CER recommends:

- 3.3.1 To express our thankfulness for the blessing of enjoying a lengthy and fruitful relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC);
- 3.3.2 To continue EF Category A with the OPC according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.3 To mandate the CER to:

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- 3.3.3.1 To send a delegation to meetings of the OPC GA at least once every two years;
- 3.3.3.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the OPC to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) remains a confessionally Reformed church with which the CanRC shares a long-standing relationship.
- 4.2 The CER has diligently maintained contact and reported faithfully.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To express our thankfulness for the blessing of enjoying a lengthy and fruitful relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC);
- 5.2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.3 To mandate the CER to:
  - 5.3.1 To send a delegation to meetings of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) General Assembly at least once every two years;
  - 5.3.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the OPC to the churches six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

#### ADOPTED

#### Article 50 – Overture RSE 2024: Adding a Footnote to the Apostles’ Creed

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on RSE 2024 Overture on Adding a Footnote to the Apostles’ Creed. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

#### Article 51 – Appeals against GS 2022 art. 108 dec. 3.5: Length of Appointment

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a report on an appeal and an “overture” re the length of Synod Committee Terms. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

#### Article 52 – CPTPF (Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding)

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on the CPTPF Report. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

#### Article 53 – Closing Devotions

Rev. Marc Jagt read Philippians 2:12-18 and led in prayer, remembering the RPCNA. The day was closed with the singing of Hymn 28:1,3,5.

*Synod was adjourned until 9:00am.*

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**Day 4 — Morning Session**  
**Friday, May 9, 2025**

**Article 54 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman read Psalm 122, spoke some devotional words, led in opening prayer, and had the meeting sing Psalm 122. He observed that all synod members were present and made some housekeeping comments regarding pictures and the special evening dinner. He welcomed two newly arrived fraternal observers and said a farewell to some others who were soon to leave.

**Article 55 – Adoption of Acts**

The prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected. It was determined that the process for further corrections to the *Acts* would be decided by the clerks.

**Article 56 – FRCNA – Fraternal Observer Address**

Rev. Marc Jagt introduced Rev. John Koopman and Rev. Jack Schoeman, credentialed delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA). Rev. Schoeman addressed Synod describing the FRCNA. He expressed gratitude for our relationship, tracing its history and spending some time on the topic of the nature of preaching in the CanRC and FRCNA. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 13. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

**Article 57 – Appeal against RSW 2022 art. 12: In-person Worship**

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a report on an appeal against RSW 2022 art. 12 regarding In-person Worship. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 58 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 143 dec. 3.2 & 3.4: Preparatory Examinations**

**1. Material**

1.1 Appeal from Coaldale re Preparatory Examination (8.6.4.1).

**2. Admissibility**

2.1 The appeal was declared admissible.

Grounds: It concerns a decision of the previous general synod.

**3. Observations**

3.1 The Coaldale CanRC appeals GS 2022 art. 143 dec. 3.2 which changed the Regulations for Ecclesiastical Exams to read:

*The preparatory examination is to occur in the classis where the church that sent the student's original attestation to the federational seminary belongs. The preparatory examination for a student not originating within the Canadian & American Reformed Churches is to occur in the classis where he lives.*

3.2 Coaldale proposes to delete the word "federational," claiming that by specifying a federational seminary, the amendment closes any pathway for classical examination if a

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man were to study at a non-federalional seminary.

3.3 Coaldale proposes that the Regulation Ecclesiastical Exams, GS 1958 art. 188 part I.1 (GS 2022, Appendix 23) be amended to read:

*To be eligible for call in one of the churches, one must have successfully sustained the preparatory examination. The preparatory examination will take place in the classis where the church that sent the student's original attestation to the seminary belongs. The preparatory examination for a student not originating within the Canadian & American Reformed Churches is to occur in the classis where the student resides.*

3.4 Coaldale appeals GS 2022 art. 143 dec. 3.4 which amended CO art. 4B to read:

*Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who (1) have passed a preparatory examination by classis....*

3.5 Coaldale claims that this article is not clear with respect to which classis ought to examine the student and is open to abuse, allowing for a student to select the classis he wishes to be examined by.

3.6 Coaldale proposes CO art. 4B to be amended to:

*Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who (1) have passed a preparatory examination by classis where the church that sent the student's original attestation to the seminary belongs . . .*

#### 4. Considerations

4.1 The Coaldale CanRC is incorrect that the wording adopted by GS 2022 art. 143 dec. 3.2 closes any pathway for classical examination if a man were to study at a non-federalional seminary. GS 1968 art. 171 indicates that a student from another seminary needs a certificate from the teaching staff of the CRTS as a condition of requesting a preparatory examination by classis:

*To be admitted to the ecclesiastical examinations candidates shall submit proof that they have completed their studies at our own Theological College. Candidates who took their theological training at other institutions shall present a Certificate issued by the Staff of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches stating that they have followed and/or complemented a course of studies conforming with the training provided by the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches.*

4.2 The Coaldale CanRC is incorrect when it claims that CO art. 4B requires more clarity as to which classis examines a student requesting preparatory examination. CO art. 4B gives the general principles while the details are specified in the Regulations for Ecclesiastical Exams (GS 2022 Appendix 23 [I.1]).

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

5.1 To deny the Coaldale CanRC appeal against GS 2022 art. 143 dec. 3.2 (*Preparatory Examinations*).

**ADOPTED**

### **Article 59 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 142: Days of Commemoration**

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a report on an appeal against GS 2022 art. 142 regarding Days of Commemoration (CO art. 53). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

### **Article 60 – Report: General Fund**

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a report on the General Fund. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

*Synod was adjourned for committee work.*

**Day 4 — Evening Session**  
**Friday, May 9, 2025**

### **Article 61 – Closing Devotions**

Synod reopened in plenary session at 8:50pm. The Chairman made some housekeeping comments.

Rev. Jake Torenvliet spoke some devotional words, read Acts 11:19-26, had the meeting sing Psalm 107:1,4,12, and led in prayer.

*Synod was adjourned until 9:00am.*

**Day 5 — Morning Session**  
**Saturday, May 10, 2025**

### **Article 62 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman read Psalm 48, spoke some devotional words, led in opening prayer, and had the meeting sing Psalm 48. He observed that all synod members were present and made some housekeeping comments regarding the day's proceedings.

### **Article 63 – Extra Housekeeping Matter**

*Presence on the Internet:* Only plenary sessions in which individuals address General Synod and the churches as a whole will be live streamed publicly (cf. GS 2025 art. 6)

### **Article 64 – Adoption of Acts**

The prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected. It was noted that the clerks had decided to a procedure for adopting the acts and had communicated that to all the delegates.

### **Article 65 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 60 & 81**

Synod went into closed session.

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Committee 4 presented draft 2 of a report on an appeal by the Willoughby Heights CanRC against GS 2022 art. 60 and 81. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

#### **Article 66 – Personal Appeal 8.6.8.4**

Synod continued in closed session.

Committee 4 presented draft 1 of a report on a personal appeal, agenda item 8.6.8.4. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

#### **Article 67 – Personal Appeal 8.6.8.2**

Synod continued in closed session.

Committee 4 presented draft 1 of a report on a personal appeal, agenda item 8.6.8.2. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

Synod returned to open session.

#### **Article 68 – Overtures RSE 2024 and RSW 2024: CO art. 55 (*Songs*)**

Committee 1 presented draft 1 of a report on overtures regarding CO art. 55. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

#### **Article 69 – CER (Ecumenical Relations): Study Mandate CO art. 50 & ER Rules**

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on Report 2: Study Mandate of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

Synod decided to provisionally adopt new rules for ecumenical relations. This provisional adoption took place with a view to decisions to be taken on Monday, May 12, regarding various churches with whom the CanRC have ecumenical relations.

*Synod was adjourned for committee work.*

#### **Article 70 – Closing Devotions**

Synod reopened in plenary session at 1:00pm. The Chairman made some housekeeping comments.

Rev. Hendrik Alkema read Isaiah 6:1-8, spoke some devotional words, had the meeting sing Psalm 133, and led in prayer.

*Synod was adjourned until Monday 9:00am.*

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**Day 6 — Morning Session**  
**Monday, May 12, 2025**

**Article 71 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman read Psalm 46, spoke some devotional words, led in opening prayer, and had the meeting sing Psalm 46:1,2,5. He observed that all synod members were present and made some housekeeping comments regarding the day's proceedings.

**Article 72 – Adoption of Acts**

The prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

**Article 73 – CER (Ecumenical Relations): Study Mandate CO art. 50 & ER Rules**

**1. Material**

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 2: Study Mandate (8.2.10.2).
- 1.2 Letters from the churches: Barrhead (8.3.10.2), Brampton (Grace) (8.3.10.4), Burlington (Fellowship) (8.3.10.5), Calgary (8.3.10.7), Carman East (8.3.10.8), Flamborough (Redemption) (8.3.10.9), Guelph (Emmanuel) (8.3.10.11), Hamilton (Providence) (8.3.10.12), Nooksack Valley (8.3.10.13), Attercliffe (8.3.10.14), Chilliwack (8.3.10.15), Edmonton (Immanuel) (8.3.10.16), Fergus North (8.3.10.17), Grassie (Covenant) (8.3.10.18).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

- 2.2 The letters were declared admissible.

Grounds: They interact with a report to GS 2025 and were received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 108) mandated the CER:

[3.8] To request the CER to further consider the mandate of GS 2019 (Art. 149 Rec. 4.1.1), specifically taking into account the input received from the churches in response to the majority and minority reports regarding the matters of:

[3.8.1] Categories of Ecumenical Relationships (Recommendation 1);

[3.8.2] Rules for Ecumenical Relationships (Recommendation 2);

[3.8.3] Revision of Church Order Article 50 (Recommendation 3):

[3.8.3.1] To consider, if a change to CO Art. 50 is deemed necessary, whether this should be initiated by a local church.

- 3.2 From the CER report, re CO art. 50, the following:

3.2.1 The Church Order currently states:

***Article 50: Churches Abroad***

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*The relation with churches abroad shall be regulated by general synod. With foreign churches of Reformed confession a sister-church relationship shall be maintained as much as possible. On minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected.*

3.2.2 Is the ecclesiastical route required for revision of the Church Order?

3.2.2.1 One purpose of the ecclesiastical route is to give local churches more opportunity to give proposed changes due attention than by way of committee report. However, roughly half the local churches will not see a proposal (overture) until it has been adopted by a regional synod and distributed no less than 5 months prior to a general synod;

3.2.2.2 The CER points to a prior decision of synod (GS 2019 art. 145 cons. 4.2.7) to change a confession based on a committee report to justify its proposal to change an article of the CO.

3.2.3 The expressions “churches abroad” and “foreign churches”

3.2.3.1 The CER points to reports and letters from the churches to GS 2022 that answer this concern.

3.2.4 The phrase “minor points of doctrine”

3.2.4.1 The CER carefully weighed the concerns and determined that the confessions of the churches express the boundaries of major and minor points.

3.2.5 Minor points of ecclesiastical governance and practice

3.2.5.1 In keeping with BC art. 32, which speaks of “a certain order,” ecclesiastical governance covers other orders of church government, for example, Westminster Form of Government;

3.2.5.2 “Ecclesiastical practice” refers to worship practices.

3.2.6 “According to the rules adopted for this purpose by general synod” vs. “shall be regulated by general synod”

3.2.6.1 Confusion exists regarding the meaning and role of “regulate” in relation to CO art. 50.

3.2.6.2 The proposed wording maintains the principle that the churches in common determine the *process* for ecumenical relations while clarifying that synods and classes may participate in the *execution* of that process.

3.2.6.3 The proposed wording clarifies, not expands, the scope of the act.

3.2.7 “Should not be” or “shall not be”

3.2.7.1 “Should” is rather vague;

3.2.7.2 Using “shall” is consistent with its use elsewhere in the Church Order.

3.3 The CER recommends:

3.3.1 Changing CO art. 50 to read:

***Article 50: Ecumenical Relationships***

*Ecumenical relationships with other churches of Reformed confession shall be entered into where feasible and be maintained according to the rules adopted for*

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*this purpose by general synod. On minor points of ecclesiastical governance and practice churches shall not be rejected.*

- 3.4 The Barrhead CanRC finds the change from “Church Order and ecclesiastical practice” to “ecclesiastical governance and practice” to be a subjective and overly broad term.
- 3.5 From the CER Report, re Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, the following:
  - 3.5.1 “A survey of decisions made by past general synods will show that, as a federation, we have not always had a clear or consistent view of what we hope to achieve in and through our ecclesiastical relationships. This appears to be a consequence of the apparent tension between principled desires and practical realities.”
  - 3.5.2 “Differences in geography, language, culture, and history often prove to be significant barriers to achieving a [desired] fully integrated union between faithful federations.”
  - 3.5.3 “Our current rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship have been in place since 1992... increasingly, the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach does not mesh well with our contemporary ecclesiastical context.”
  - 3.5.4 “The practice of having varied levels and/or categories of ecumenical relationships is widely used in the Reformed/Presbyterian world.”
  - 3.5.5 “The CanRC exists in a context where confessionally faithful churches live side by side in local and regional settings. Individuals in those confessionally faithful churches quite often find themselves working collaboratively with each other in causes related to the advancement of God’s kingdom.”
  - 3.5.6 “...to fulfil our LORD’s command to seek and maintain the unity of his church, there must be acknowledgement of the possibility of the local church to interact with other faithful churches, when, in the Lord’s providence, other faithful churches are found in close proximity.”
  - 3.5.7 “To draw from the wisdom of many counsellors, local churches should ensure classis is aware of local relations. In situations where occasional pulpit fellowship would be desirable, involvement of classis and the deputies of regional synod would be required.”
  - 3.5.8 Article 32 of the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO), provisionally adopted by GS 2010 (Burlington), made allowance for “preaching exchange and fellowship at the Lord’s supper” by a local church in its ecumenical activities, on the condition of classical approbation.
- 3.6 The CER recommends:
  - 3.6.1 Synod adopt rules for establishing and maintaining ecclesiastical relationships as follows:

**Rule 1**

*Level 1 – Ecclesiastical Fellowship*

At a federative level, the following shall apply by decision of General Synod:

**Ecclesiastical Fellowship – Category A** is with other churches of Reformed confession according to C.O. Art. 50. This relationship is maintained with

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churches with which we have **intense contact**. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

- (1) Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
- (2) The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting Christian unity.
- (3) Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
- (4) Pulpit fellowship.
- (5) Reception of members at the Lord's supper according to local regulations.
- (6) Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
- (7) Consultation on issues of joint concern, particularly prior to instituting changes in doctrine, worship and governance which might affect the basis of the fellowship.
- (8) Joint action in areas of common responsibility.
- (9) Exchange of relevant ecclesiastical materials, including:
  - a. The Minutes/Acts of major assemblies;
  - b. Yearbooks/Directories of the churches;
  - c. The most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards;
  - d. The most recent published edition of the Church Order;
  - e. The most recently published edition of an approved psalter, or psalter-hymnal.

**Ecclesiastical Fellowship - Category B** is with other churches of Reformed confession according to C.O. Art. 50. This relationship is maintained with churches with whom we have **less intense contact** for geographical, linguistic, or historical reasons. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

- (1) Welcome of fraternal observers at appropriate major assemblies.
- (2) Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
- (3) Pulpit fellowship.
- (4) Reception of members at the Lord's supper according to local regulations.
- (5) Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
- (6) Communication on issues of joint concern.
- (7) Review relevant ecclesiastical materials and monitor faithfulness to the Reformed confessions.

#### Level 2 – Ecclesiastical Contact

**Ecclesiastical Contact** is with other churches of Reformed confession with which we do not have Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Such churches may include churches with membership in NAPARC, or the ICRC, as well as other churches as

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determined by general synod. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

- (1) Meetings, both formal and informal, of delegates to the meetings of NAPARC and the ICRC and on other occasions that may arise.
- (2) Mutual labours as members of NAPARC and the ICRC in the discharge of the purposes of the council/conference.
- (3) Welcome of fraternal observers at major assemblies.
- (4) Other duties as directed by general synod.

The Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) shall periodically review our ecumenical relationships to ensure we are honouring our commitments to each other. Furthermore, the CER may make recommendations, without prejudice, to General Synod regarding the optimal placement of federations within these categories.

### **Rule 2**

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:

- (1) Pulpit fellowship may occur with the concurring advice of classis and the deputies of regional synod. This fellowship will be implemented in a manner determined by classis.
- (2) Reception of members at the Lord's supper according to local regulations.
- (3) Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
- (4) Churches shall give an account of their ecumenical activities to their respective classis.

3.7 The Brampton (Grace) CanRC raises a concern over regional synod or general synod being able to override decisions at the classis level regarding a local context.

3.8 The Burlington (Fellowship) CanRC requests the reference to deputies of regional synod be removed from Rule 2 (1) as CO art. 4B 1&2 does not mention deputies of regional synod nor occasional pulpit supply in the local church. Further, the inclusion of the deputies of regional synod does not correspond to the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO), provisionally adopted in 2010, nor the practice of the FRCA.

3.9 The Nooksack Valley ARC believes it would be wise to stipulate that concurring advice of classis and regional synod be given *before* entering into local ecclesiastical relationships.

3.10 The Attercliffe CanRC suggests several changes:

- 3.10.1 To maintain the confessional language of BC art. 29, recommends qualifying the churches we have relations with using "other true and faithful";
- 3.10.2 To add "and whenever feasible striving for ecclesiastical unity" to the phrase "promoting Christian unity" in keeping with John 17;
- 3.10.3 To attach "in compliance with the Church Order" to "local regulations" to avoid undermining the role of the Church Order;

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3.10.4 To move the requirement for the concurring advice of classis and the deputies of regional synod for engaging in local ecumenical relationships under Rule 2 into the introduction as the rule should control reception of members and Lord's supper;

3.10.5 To clarify that Rule 2 applies to local ecclesiastical relations with churches not covered by Rule 1 Level 1.

3.11 The Chilliwack CanRC:

3.11.1 Notes that Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B is missing "the exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting Christian unity". They believe we have a responsibility of mutual concern and admonition towards all churches with whom we have EF;

3.11.2 Would like Rule 2 removed in its entirety for the following reasons:

3.11.2.1 Point 1 seems to conflict with CO art. 4;

3.11.2.2 Point 2 seems to conflict with CO art. 61;

3.11.2.3 Point 3 is completely unnecessary as churches can already receive members into their congregations from non-sister churches by way of baptism and/or profession of faith;

3.11.2.4 Point 4 is unnecessary as this can already be implemented at the individual classis level.

3.12 The Edmonton (Immanuel) CanRC recommends Rule 2, Point 2 read "Reception of members at the Lord's Supper according to CO Art 61".

3.13 The Fergus North CanRC is concerned that Rule 2 will result in inconsistencies across the various classes.

3.14 The Grassie CanRC recommends that Rule 2 Point 1 be revised to require the minister be "a member in good standing of an ICRC or NAPARC Church".

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The CER sufficiently answered the concerns raised by the churches at GS 2022 regarding the suggested revision of CO art. 50.
- 4.2 The Barrhead CanRC does not provide any compelling arguments that the broadness of the term is not helpful.
- 4.3 The CER fulfilled their mandate in showing the need for new rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF).
- 4.4 The Attercliffe CanRC and the Edmonton (Immanuel) CanRC raises valuable points about the relationship between the Church Order and local regulations.
- 4.5 Attercliffe is correct that the Church Order governs the reception of members at the Lord's supper and the reception of members into local congregations, but they do not demonstrate that these parts of church life should also be under the oversight of classis and the deputies of regional synod.
- 4.6 While no churches objected to the CER recommendation to the involvement of classes in occasional pulpit fellowship, the Burlington (Fellowship) CanRC correctly observes that CO art. 4B does not require the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod:

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4.6.1 According to CO art. 5 A1b, the deputies of regional synod provide concurring advice at peremptory examinations. This is because the decision affects all the churches. Rule 2 is explicitly about the local context and for that reason the role of the deputies of regional synod in Rule 2 necessarily performs a different function. The CER report does not state what that function is, nor why it is necessary.

4.7 The Nooksack Valley ARC states that “it would be wise to stipulate that concurring advice of classis and the deputies of regional synod be given *before* entering into local ecclesiastical relationships”. However, “advice” implies prior to implementation, just as one seeks advice prior to acting in a matter of discipline.

4.8 The concern from the Chilliwack CanRC for “the exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting Christian unity” is well intended but in effect it eliminates the value of the Category B relationship. The clause obligates an intense, active monitoring of the life of the federation. By contrast, without this clause the committee does not have a *lack* of concern for the federation, but that concern is expressed reactively.

4.9 Chilliwack does not sufficiently make the case that Rule 2 should be removed.

4.10 The concern from the Fergus North CanRC about inconsistencies arising fails to account for the purpose of the Rule 2 to account for differences in local context.

4.11 The recommendation of the Grassie CanRC that Rule 2 only applies to churches in NAPARC and ICRC is unnecessarily restrictive. The CO already provides the safety that Grassie seeks to ensure.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

5.1 To adopt the following text for CO art. 50:

***Article 50: Ecumenical Relationships***

***Ecumenical relationships with other churches of Reformed confession shall be entered into where feasible and be maintained according to the rules adopted for this purpose by general synod. On minor points of ecclesiastical governance and practice churches shall not be rejected.***

5.2 To adopt the following rules:

***Rule 1***

***Level 1 – Ecclesiastical Fellowship***

At a federative level, the following shall apply by decision of General Synod:

**Ecclesiastical Fellowship – Category A** is with other churches of Reformed confession according to CO art. 50. This relationship is maintained with churches with which we have **intense contact**. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

- (1) Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
- (2) The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting Christian unity and whenever feasible striving for ecclesiastical unity.
- (3) Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.

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- (4) Pulpit fellowship.
- (5) Reception of members at the Lord's supper according to local regulations.
- (6) Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
- (7) Consultation on issues of joint concern, particularly prior to instituting changes in doctrine, worship and governance which might affect the basis of the fellowship.
- (8) Joint action in areas of common responsibility.
- (9) Exchange of relevant ecclesiastical materials, including:
  - a. The Minutes/Acts of major assemblies;
  - b. Yearbooks/Directories of the churches;
  - c. The most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards;
  - d. The most recent published edition of the Church Order;
  - e. The most recent published edition of an approved psalter, or psalter-hymnal.

**Ecclesiastical Fellowship - Category B** is with other churches of Reformed confession according to CO art. 50. This relationship is maintained with churches with whom we have **less intense contact** for geographical, linguistic, or historical reasons. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

- (1) Welcome of fraternal observers at appropriate major assemblies.
- (2) Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
- (3) Pulpit fellowship.
- (4) Reception of members at the Lord's supper according to local regulations.
- (5) Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
- (6) Communication on issues of joint concern.
- (7) Review relevant ecclesiastical materials and monitor faithfulness to the Reformed confessions.

#### Level 2 – Ecclesiastical Contact

**Ecclesiastical Contact** is with other churches of Reformed confession with which we do not have Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Such churches may include churches with membership in NAPARC, or the ICRC, as well as other churches as determined by general synod. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

- (1) Meetings, both formal and informal, of delegates to the meetings of NAPARC and the ICRC and on other occasions that may arise.
- (2) Mutual labours as members of NAPARC and the ICRC in the discharge of the purposes of the council/conference.
- (3) Welcome of fraternal observers at major assemblies.

(4) Other duties as directed by general synod.

The Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) shall periodically review our ecumenical relationships to ensure we are honouring our commitments to each other. Furthermore, the CER may make recommendations, without prejudice, to general synod regarding the optimal placement of federations within these categories.

**Rule 2**

In circumstances where no Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Rule 1, Level 1) exists, churches may engage in ecumenical relationships with other local churches of Reformed confession as per CO art. 50, in accordance with the following protocols:

- (1) Pulpit fellowship may occur with the concurring advice of classis.
- (2) Reception of members at the Lord's supper according to local regulations.
- (3) Reception of members into the local congregation according to local regulations.
- (4) Churches shall give an account of their ecumenical activities to their respective classis.

**ADOPTED**

**Article 74 – ERQ (Reformed Church of Quebec)**

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on Report 4: ERQ of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

*The Chairman welcomed grade 11 & 12 students from Credo Christian High School. He gave some explanation of proceedings.*

**Article 75 – URCNA (United Reformed Churches in North America)**

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on Report 12: United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The report was discussed, with participation by the URCNA fraternal delegate. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 76 – FRCA – Fraternal Delegate Address**

Rev. Carl Van Dam introduced Rev. Wes Bredenhof and Rev. Anthon Souman, credentialed delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). Rev. Souman addressed Synod and provided an overview of the FRCA. He expressed gratitude for our close sister-church relationship. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 14. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

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**Article 77 – FRCA (Free Reformed Churches of Australia)****1. Material**

1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 13: Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) (8.2.10.13).

**2. Admissibility**

2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

**3. Observations**

3.1 GS 2022 (art. 169) decided:

- [3.1] To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules;
- [3.2] To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing support for and interest in the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS), including financial support;
- [3.3] To encourage the Board of Governors and Senate of the CRTS to continue contact with the deputyship for theological education in the FRCA to explore the feasibility and benefits of delivering theological education in Australia;
- [3.4] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.4.1] To maintain close contact with the deputyship of the FRCA in matters of relations with sister-churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third-party relationships;
  - [3.4.2] To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise, Committee on Bible Translations) in areas of mutual interest where the CER's mandate does not reach;
  - [3.4.3] To communicate to the FRCA the value of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) and encourage them to consider membership;
  - [3.4.4] To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2024;
  - [3.4.5] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 The CanRC enjoys a close bond with the FRCA involving a very similar history and are of mutual support.
- 3.2.2 The FRCA send their theological students to the CRTS, contribute substantially to its support, and are thankful for the high quality of the training and its faithfulness to Scripture.

3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing prayerful and financial support for the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS);

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- 3.3.2 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules;
- 3.3.3 To express appreciation for the fact that the FRCA has decided to send observers to the next International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and to continue to encourage the FRCA to consider membership in the ICRC;
- 3.3.4 To mandate the CER:
  - 3.3.4.1 To maintain close contact with the deputyships of the FRCA in matters of common interest, such as, e.g., ecumenical relations and changes in third party relationships;
  - 3.3.4.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FRCA to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) continues to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC and FRCA is mutually beneficial.
- 4.2 As the ICRC is a forum where churches meet who profess and seek to be faithful to Scripture as summarized in Reformed confessions, FRCA membership in the ICRC would be of benefit to ICRC member churches and to the FRCA itself.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To express thankfulness and appreciation for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)'s ongoing prayerful and financial support for the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS);
- 5.2 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules;
- 5.3 To express appreciation for the fact that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) has decided to send observers to the next International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and to continue to encourage the FRCA to consider membership in the ICRC;
- 5.4 To mandate the CER:
  - 5.4.1 To maintain close contact with the deputyships of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) in matters of common interest, such as, e.g., common ecumenical relations and changes in third party relationships;
  - 5.4.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FRCA to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

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**Article 78 – HRC (Heritage Reformed Congregations)****1. Material**

1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 6: Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) (8.2.10.6).

**2. Admissibility**

2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

**3. Observations**

3.1 GS 2022 (art. 162) decided:

- [3.1] To accept the Heritage Reformed Churches in North America (HRCNA) Level 2 relationship of “Formal Correspondence”;
- [3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.2.1] To continue discussions with the HRCNA in an effort to work towards Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);
  - [3.2.2] To meet simultaneously with the HRCNA and Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) ecumenicity committees;
  - [3.2.3] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 The HRC is a member of both NAPARC and ICRC.
- 3.2.2 The CER has had several interactions with the HRC since 2022, including bilateral meetings at NAPARC.
- 3.2.3 The HRC emphasizes Christ-centred preaching and the unconditional offer of grace.
- 3.2.4 The HRC have expressed to us their appreciation for the individual and institutional collaboration between Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) and our CRTS.
- 3.2.5 The CER was unable to meet simultaneously with the FRCNA and HRC ecumenical committees as mandated.
- 3.2.6 Progress towards organic unity between the FRCNA and HRC appears to have stalled. The FRCNA/HRC joint unity committee has not been disbanded but its focus is now more on “grassroots” activity.

3.3 The CER recommends that Synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact (EC) with the Heritage Reformed Churches in North America (HRC) according to the adopted rules with a view to possibly advancing this to a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To convey this decision to the HRC;
  - 3.3.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the HRC to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The CanRC shares the same Reformed confessional standards as the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC).
- 4.2 The CER has found the HRC to be faithful to Scripture and the gospel of Christ.
- 4.3 The HRC is receptive to dialogue and discussion with the CanRC and we are already in their “Level 2” relationship.
- 4.4 The HRC work together with the CanRC on a local level as well as through our respective seminaries, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) and CRTS.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact (EC) with the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) according to the adopted rules with a view to possibly advancing this to a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF).
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To convey this decision to the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC);
  - 5.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the HRC to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### ADOPTED

### Article 79 – FRCNA (Free Reformed Churches of North America)

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 5: Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA) (8.2.10.5).
- 1.2 Letter from the church at Guelph (Emmanuel) (8.3.10.11).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.  
Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.
- 2.2 The letter was declared admissible.  
Grounds: It interacts with a report to GS 2025 and was received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 161) decided:

- [3.1] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.1.1] To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA);
  - [3.1.2] To meet simultaneously with the Heritage Reformed Churches in North America (HRCNA) and FRCNA ecumenicity committees;
  - [3.1.3] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

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3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 The CER met with the FRCNA at NAPARC 2022 and 2023;
- 3.2.2 A meeting was held in March 2023 to discuss theological emphases, particularly regarding covenant theology and the preaching of faith and repentance;
- 3.2.3 The FRCNA expressed appreciation for the ongoing discussions and desire to continue dialogue;
- 3.2.4 The FRCNA maintains formal contact with the CanRC and other NAPARC churches;
- 3.2.5 The CER was unable to meet simultaneously with the FRCNA and HRC ecumenical committees as mandated;
- 3.2.6 Progress towards organic unity between the FRCNA and HRC appears to have stalled. The FRCNA/HRC joint unity committee has not been disbanded but its focus is now more on “grassroots” activity;
- 3.2.7 The FRCNA continues to closely monitor its relationship with the CGKN and has sent them a formal letter of concern over the matter of women in office;
- 3.2.8 The CER remain convinced that discussions on covenant and appropriation of salvation can take place within a bond of brotherly fellowship within the bounds of Scripture and confession.

3.3 The CER recommends that Synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact (EC) with the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) according to the adopted rules with a view to possibly advancing this to a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To convey this decision to the FRCNA;
  - 3.3.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FRCNA to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

3.4 The Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC cautions against having personal and anecdotal experiences weigh on the federation’s ecumenical relationships, whether positively or negatively.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The CanRC currently enjoys a relationship with the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) under their “Level 1” category (Formal Contact) as per the decision of GS 2019 (art. 148).
- 4.2 The CanRC has good connections and relations with the FRCNA on several local levels in some areas.
- 4.3 There is not a pressing need to meet jointly with the FRCNA and Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) committees while their unity discussions are stalled.
- 4.4 The comment from the Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC is noted.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

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- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact (EC) with the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) according to the adopted rules with a view to possibly advancing this to a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF).
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To convey this decision to the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA);
  - 5.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FRCNA to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

## ADOPTED

### Article 80 – KPCA-K (Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin)

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on Report 8: Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K) of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

*The Chairman bade farewell to the grade 11 & 12 students from Credo Christian High School. Synod broke for coffee while the grade 11 & 12 students left and the grade 9 & 10 students came in.*

*Following the break, the Chairman welcomed grade 9 & 10 students from Credo Christian High School. He gave some explanation of proceedings.*

### Article 81 – FRCSA – Fraternal Delegate Address

Rev. Karlo Janssen introduced the Rev. Johan Bruintjes, credentialed delegate of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA). Rev. Bruintjes addressed Synod and provided an overview of the FRCSA. He expressed gratitude for our close sister-church relationship. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 15. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

### Article 82 – RCUS (Reformed Church in the United States)

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 9: Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) (8.2.10.9).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 165) decided:

- [3.1] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) under the adopted rules;

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- [3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) to submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 Much appreciation is expressed officially and unofficially for the CanRC's diligence in sending fraternal delegates to RCUS Classes and Synods;
- 3.2.2 Discussions on differing church polity or practices happen as opportunities arise;
- 3.2.3 The CanRC and the RCUS can effectively assist each other in a variety of ways.

3.3 The CER recommends that Synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER)
  - 3.3.2.1 To send delegates to meetings of the RCUS synod at least once every two years;
  - 3.3.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the RCUS to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Reformed Churches in the United States (RCUS) continues to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction, a close relationship between the CanRC and the RCUS is mutually beneficial.
- 4.2 The RCUS very much appreciates the developing relationship with the CanRC. They especially appreciate having fraternal delegates attend major assemblies.
- 4.3 The CanRC and the RCUS can effectively assist each other via pulpit exchanges, visiting each other's churches, participating in youth camps/conferences held by the various churches and the exchange of articles in magazines supported by church members.
- 4.4 The RCUS synod takes place every year. To be present just once every three years could give the wrong impression of how we value the relationship. To be present every year might not be financially prudent.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To send delegates to meetings of the Reformed Churches in the United States (RCUS) synod at least once every two years.
  - 5.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the RCUS to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

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**Article 83 – RPCC (Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada)**

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on Report 11: Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC) of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). Synod decided to postpone discussion until the relationship with the RPCNA is discussed.

**Article 84 – IRB (Reformed Churches in Brazil)****1. Material**

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 14: Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) (8.2.10.14).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 124) decided:

- [3.1] To express gratitude for the continued desire of the IRB to grow in knowledge and faithfulness;
- [3.2] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of Brazil (IRB) under the adopted rules;
- [3.3] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.3.1] To use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to this federation of churches;
  - [3.3.2] To visit the IRB at least twice before the next synod;
  - [3.3.3] To work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and the Hamilton-Cornerstone CanRC given their mission work in Brazil;
  - [3.3.4] To submit its report to the churches six months before the convening of the next general synod.

- 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 Observing the IRB Concílio at work gives reason for thankfulness. This young federation demonstrates a steady focus on building up the church, and a desire to remain faithful;
- 3.2.2 Our relationship is very important to both the IRB and CanRC churches. The CanRC can provide guidance, and the IRB reminds us to value and hold on to our rich heritage;
- 3.2.3 The IRB works hard at evangelism despite financial challenges. The churches have spread from the northeast into the south of Brazil;
- 3.2.4 The IRB demonstrates that they remain faithful churches. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to Reformed confessions and church order;
- 3.2.5 Finances, manpower, and education of new believers continues to be a significant challenge for the IRB;

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3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To express gratitude for the continued desire of the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) to grow in knowledge and faithfulness;
- 3.3.2 To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Churches of Brazil (IRB) under the adopted rules;
- 3.3.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.3.1 To use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to this federation of churches;
  - 3.3.3.2 To visit the IRB at least twice before the next general synod of the CanRC;
  - 3.3.3.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and the Hamilton (Cornerstone) CanRC given their mission work in Brazil;
  - 3.3.3.4 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the IRB to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) continue to display the marks of true and faithful churches of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC and IRB is mutually beneficial.
- 4.2 The IRB is a very young federation with only one sister church, the CanRC. Our encouragement to them is sought and very much appreciated.
- 4.3 As sending churches, the Aldergrove CanRC and the Hamilton (Cornerstone) CanRC have a lot of insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the IRB, as well as having missionaries and mission aid workers on the ground.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To express gratitude for the continued desire of the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) to grow in knowledge and faithfulness;
- 5.2 To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Churches of Brazil (IRB) under the adopted rules;
- 5.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.3.1 To use every opportunity to have contact with the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) and to provide encouragement to this federation of churches;
  - 5.3.2 To visit the IRB at least twice before the next general synod of the CanRC;
  - 5.3.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and the Hamilton (Cornerstone) CanRC given their mission work in Brazil;
  - 5.3.4 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the IRB to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

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**Article 85 – KPCK (Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea)**

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on Report 18: Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK) of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 86 – RCNZ (Reformed Churches of New Zealand)****1. Material**

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 20: Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ) (8.2.10.20).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 146) decided:

- [3.1] To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ) under the adopted rules;
- [3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.2.1] To express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua New Guinea;
  - [3.2.2] To send a delegation to the next RCNZ Synod;
  - [3.2.3] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod;
- [3.3] To take note that the different structures of the RCNZ and the CanRC for the material support of emeritus ministers complicates the transfer of ministers between the CanRC and RCNZ, as it also does between the CanRC and the FRCSA. The material support for emeritus ministers is beyond the jurisdiction of a general synod and thus beyond the scope of the CER.

- 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 Synod-RCNZ 2024 decided to continue its sister church relationship with the CanRC and to send a delegate to GS 2025.
- 3.2.2 There continues to be good unity with the CanRC on missions, particularly in Papua-New Guinea.
- 3.2.3 The RCNZ demonstrates a determination to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture and confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice.

- 3.3 The CER recommends synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ) in the mission in Papua New Guinea;
- 3.3.2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the RCNZ according to the adopted rules;

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3.3.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

3.3.3.1 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the RCNZ to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4. Considerations

4.1 The Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ) continues to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC and the RCNZ is mutually beneficial.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ) in the mission in Papua New Guinea;
- 5.2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.3.1 To send a delegation to meetings of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ) Synod every 3 years;
  - 5.3.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the RCNZ to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### ADOPTED

*The Chairman bade farewell to the grade 9 & 10 students from Credo Christian High School.*

#### Article 87 – FCS (Free Church of Scotland)

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on Report 21: Free Church of Scotland (FCS) of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

#### Article 88 – FCC (Free Church of Scotland (Continuing))

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on Report 22: Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

#### Article 89 – CPTPF (Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding)

##### 1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CPTPF) (8.2.7).
- 1.2 Letter from Willoughby Heights (8.3.7.1).

##### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

2.2 The letter was declared admissible.

Grounds: It interacts with a report to GS 2025 and was received on time.

### 3. Observations

3.1 GS 2022 (art. 72) mandated the CPTPF:

- [3.1] To express gratitude to the Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC and its committee for the work it has done;
- [3.2] To reappoint Guelph-Emmanuel as the Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CTPTF) with the following mandate:
  - [3.2.1] To look after all internship-related funding matters;
  - [3.2.2] To assess the churches each year based on the anticipated funding required for a particular summer;
  - [3.2.3] To report about its activities to the next general synod, which report shall be sent to all the churches at least six months prior to the next general synod.

3.2 The Willoughby Heights CanRC expresses appreciation for the detailed report submitted by the CPTPF, but notes 3 separate items for consideration:

- 3.2.1 Willoughby Heights finds there is an imprecision in terminology where the report suggests that the church and the committee are two different entities;
- 3.2.2 Willoughby Heights requests GS 2025 to mandate the CPTPF to reconsider guidelines 1b and 1c (appendix 2 of the report) and build in more financial flexibility and discretion for students who travel outside of Ontario;
- 3.2.3 Willoughby Heights requests that the committee updates guideline 3b (appendix 2 of the report) regarding the timing for students to complete the program following the decision of GS 2019 art. 85 (Recommendation 5.1.2.4).

### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The CPTPF has done its work with dedication and accountability, and the funding program has worked well.
- 4.2 The Willoughby Heights CanRC is correct where it appears that the Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC and Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CPTPF) are 2 separate entities. Appendix 1 of the CPTPF report incorrectly states: "The Church at Guelph has been charged by Synod Smithers 2007 to appoint a Committee for Pastoral Training Program (PTP) Funding (Art. 159.2 of the Acts)," when in fact GS 2007 appointed Guelph (Emmanuel) itself as the Committee and not that the church was charged to appoint a committee.
- 4.3 Willoughby Heights acknowledges that there are additional funds available for students that travel to Western Canada for their pastoral training as indicated in the Guidelines 1b. However, they correctly state that the additional funds are insufficient taking into account travel and accommodation expenses. Willoughby Heights encourages the committee to reconsider their policy as stated in Guideline 1b and 1c so that smaller churches will be more encouraged to participate and not be burdened by the additional costs of hosting students for the PTP.

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4.4 Willoughby Heights correctly indicates that Guideline 3b is at odds with the decision of GS 2019 art. 85 con. 5.1.2.4 which states: “That in the summer immediately following classical permission or licensure—whether this be after either the student’s second or third year of studies—the student must follow a summer internship . . .”

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To express gratitude to the Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC for the work it has done as Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CPTPF);
- 5.2 To mandate the committee with the following:
  - 5.2.1 To look after all internship-related funding matters;
  - 5.2.2 To assess the churches each year based on the anticipated funding required for a particular summer;
  - 5.2.3 To receive and review the submission from the Willoughby Heights CanRC, make the necessary revisions according to Consideration 4.2 and 4.4; and to reconsider their Guidelines as indicated in Consideration 4.3;
  - 5.2.4 To submit its report on its activities to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

## ADOPTED

### Article 90 – Appeals against GS 2022 art. 108 dec. 3.5: Length of Appointments

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal of Ancaster CanRC against the decision of GS 2022 art. 108 (8.6.10).
- 1.2 Glanbrook’s “overture” regarding GS 2022 art. 108 (8.4.5).
- 1.3 Letter from Attercliffe expressing support for Glanbrook’s overture (8.5.2.1).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The appeal from the Ancaster CanRC is admissible as it is an appeal of a decision of a general synod and was received prior to the deadline.
- 2.2 The “overture” from the Glanbrook CanRC is, in effect, an appeal of GS 2022 art. 108 and, since it was received on time, is thus admissible.
- 2.3 The letter from Attercliffe comments on the matter raised by Glanbrook. Because Glanbrook’s submission is essentially an appeal, such a submission ought not to have been available for comment by the churches. Hence, the letter of Attercliffe is declared inadmissible.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 The Ancaster CanRC appeals GS 2022 art. 108 dec. 3.5, which set the length of appointments to the Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) at twelve years (four three-year terms), rather than the previously standard nine years (three three-year terms).

3.2 Ancaster points out:

- 3.2.1 No reason was given by GS 2022 for the change in term length, either in its grounds or in the committee report recommendation.
- 3.2.2 Prior to GS 2022, there was no precedent for a 12-year maximum for committee appointments in the Canadian Reformed Churches.
- 3.2.3 GS 1995 (art. 116) established, as a general rule, a maximum term of nine consecutive years for synodical committee members, balancing continuity with regular turnover.

3.3 Ancaster argues that:

- 3.3.1 Decisions of earlier synods should be respected unless compelling reasons are provided for change;
- 3.3.2 In this case, no compelling reason was offered to justify departing from the nine-year standard.

3.4 Ancaster requests that GS 2025:

- 3.4.1 Rescind GS 2022 art. 108 dec. 3.5;
- 3.4.2 Reinstate the maximum of three, three-year terms (totaling nine years) for appointments to the CER, in line with GS 1995.

3.5 The Glanbrook CanRC shares the same basic concerns as Ancaster but adds the following points:

- 3.5.1 The committee appears to have recommended an increase of term length based in part on a suggestion from only one other federation;
- 3.5.2 The CER's proposal of a 12-year term was noted as a concern by some churches writing to GS 2022 but "Synod did not interact with this concern";
- 3.5.3 While personal relations of committee members with their counterparts are important, "these personal relations, however, must always remain subservient to the ecclesiastical relations themselves." The potential is there over a longer span of time that such personal familiarity actually "gets in the way" of ecclesiastical relations.

#### 4. Considerations

4.1 *Concerning Synodical Continuity and Authority:*

- 4.1.2 GS 1995 decided on a nine-year maximum for committee appointments to promote both stability and healthy turnover.
- 4.1.3 CO art. 31 requires respect for settled and binding decisions unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Church Order, or unless causing evident harm.
- 4.1.4 GS 2022 did not provide any grounds or rationale for altering the standard to twelve years and thus failed to meet the necessary threshold for changing established practice.

4.2 *Concerning Transparency and Responsibility:*

- 4.2.1 Significant changes to standing rules or practices should be made with clear, public reasoning.

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4.2.2 The absence of any recorded justification for extending committee terms undermines good order and transparency in church governance.

4.3 *Concerning Good Governance Principles:*

4.3.1 Nine years already represents a significant period of service.

4.3.2 As the Glanbrook CanRC states, a longer term runs the risk of personal relations getting in the way of ecclesiastical relations. It also reduces opportunities for broader participation in church governance, and diminishes the benefit of fresh perspectives.

4.3.3 Regular turnover helps maintain accountability, energy, and responsiveness within committees.

4.4 *Concerning the Proper Response to Appeals:*

4.4.1 The appeal of the Ancaster CanRC rests on a previous synodical decision and highlights real procedural deficiencies.

4.4.2 Upholding the appeal will correct an irregular decision and restore coherence to the church's standard practices.

4.5 Because the CER was counting on a twelve-year term as per GS 2022, an immediate application of the nine-year term limit would be very disruptive to the committee's work due to a large number of immediate retirements that would need to take place. For this reason, the CER should be exempt from the nine year limit until the next general synod. This should be sufficient time for the CER to internally work out an equitable retirement schedule and plan for continuity within the nine-year term limit.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To uphold the appeal of the Ancaster CanRC and the appeal of the Glanbrook CanRC regarding GS 2022 art. 108 and thus return to the decision of GS 1995 art. 116;
- 5.2 To not apply the nine-year limit to the appointments to be made by this Synod to the CER;
- 5.3 To mandate the CER to work out an equitable retirement schedule and plan for continuity within a nine-year term limit, to be sent to the churches as part of their report at least six months in advance of the next general synod.

A motion to divide the question into voting on 5.1 and 5.2-3 separately was duly moved and seconded. This motion to divide was DEFEATED.

The proposal as presented above was then

**ADOPTED**

## Article 91 – Point of order

The Synod Executive was requested to propose to the body how the Guidelines for General Synods should be changed to make clear that letters sent to a general synod in response to reports and overtures should, prior to that synod, only be available to those who are delegated to that synod.

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**Article 92 – Appeal against RSW 2022 art. 12: In-person Worship****1. Material**

- 1.1 Appeal of A. & D. Doornbos of the decision of Regional Synod West 2022 (art 12) (8.6.9).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The appeal was declared admissible.

Ground: it is an appeal of a decision of a regional synod and was received prior to the deadline.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 A. and D. Doornbos appeal the decision of Regional Synod West 2022 (art 12) which upheld a decision of Classis Alberta denying their appeal against the consistory of the Barrhead CanRC.
- 3.2 The original issue concerns the consistory's temporary suspension of in-person worship during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to government health regulations, the consistory moved services to a livestream-only format for a limited time and prohibited in-person attendance at the church building.
- 3.3 A. and D. Doornbos assert that:
  - 3.3.1 The consistory acted beyond its authority under CO art. 52 by suspending in-person worship.
  - 3.3.2 The decision constituted an unscriptural binding of conscience, since they believed God requires physical gathering and that livestreaming cannot fulfill the command to worship corporately.
  - 3.3.3 The consistory wrongly prioritized obedience to civil authority over obedience to God.
  - 3.3.4 RSW 2022 erred in upholding the consistory's actions and in failing to recognize this as a matter of moral and theological concern.
- 3.4 RSW 2022 found the appeal admissible but denied it on several grounds, including:
  - 3.4.1 That the consistory acted within its lawful authority under CO art. 52;
  - 3.4.2 That in times of extraordinary circumstances, consistories must make prudential judgments for the safety and spiritual care of the flock;
  - 3.4.3 That the appellants had not demonstrated that the consistory's actions were contrary to Scripture or confession;
  - 3.4.4 That while more could have been done pastorally, the decision to suspend in-person worship temporarily was not a violation of conscience, or of the limits of ecclesiastical authority.

**4. Considerations**

- 4.1 The consistory acted within its lawful ecclesiastical authority when it temporarily suspended in-person services in response to the government declaring a public health emergency. Under CO art. 52, consistories are charged with calling the congregation to worship and determining how this is best carried out in specific contexts. In the best

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judgment of the consistory, the COVID-19 pandemic and related government health regulations constituted an extraordinary circumstance requiring prudential judgment.

- 4.2 The decision to suspend in-person services was a temporary and circumstantial measure. The consistory did not deny the biblical necessity of corporate worship but sought, under exceptional conditions, to continue the ministry of the Word in the best way it could at the time.
- 4.3 The claim that the consistory bound the conscience of the appellants is not substantiated. In Reformed ethics, the binding of conscience occurs when human authorities impose practices in worship that are not grounded in Scripture and require them as necessary acts of obedience to God (cf. Belgic Confession art. 32). In this case, the consistory did not command anything contrary to God's Word, nor did it elevate livestream worship to a normative or divinely required practice. Rather, it made a temporary and prudential decision, under extraordinary public health circumstances, to suspend physical gatherings for a limited time. Examples of such exceptions to the ordinary application of God's law are found in Holy Scripture (see, e.g. 1 Samuel 21:1-6; 2 Chronicles 30:18-20). The decision of the consistory to temporarily suspend corporate, in-person worship did not deny or redefine the biblical obligation of corporate worship, but sought to uphold it in a constrained form during a time of emergency. While the appellants experienced the suspension as a burden on their conscience, the consistory neither denied the biblical mandate to gather nor prohibited future gathering beyond necessity. Therefore, no actual binding of conscience, in the Reformed or confessional sense, took place.

## 5. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To deny the appeal of A. and D. Doornbos.

## ADOPTED

*Synod was adjourned for committee work.*

### Day 6 — Evening Session

Monday, May 12, 2025

#### Article 93 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session at 7:00pm. The Chairman extended a welcome to all present in the building. He had the meeting sing Hymn 84. He observed that all Synod members were present. He spoke some words of farewell to a fraternal delegate who was soon to leave.

#### Article 94 – Overtures RSE 2024 and RSW 2024: CO art. 55 (*Songs*)

Committee 1 presented draft 2 of a report on Overtures RSE 2024 and RSW 2024 re CO art. 55. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

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**Article 95 – Overture RSE 2024: Adding a Footnote to the Apostles’ Creed**

Committee 3 presented draft 2 of a report on an overture re Adding a Footnote to the Apostles’ Creed. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 96 – Overtures RSE 2024: CO art. 49, 44, 47 (*Delegation to General Synod*)**

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a report on overtures RSE 2024 re CO art. 49 (& 44, 47). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 97 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 142: Days of Commemoration**

Committee 5 presented draft 2 of a report on an appeal against GS 2022 art. 142 regarding Days of Commemoration (CO art. 53). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 98 – Appeal against GS 2019 art. 23 & GS 2022 art. 120 dec. 3.8.1: Lord’s Supper Forms**

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on an appeal against GS 2019 art. 23 & GS 2022 art. 120 dec. 3.8.1 regarding shorter Lord’s Supper Forms. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 99 – Closing Devotions**

Rev. Joe Poppe read Acts 15:1-2, 22-29 and led in prayer, remembering the FRCA and FRCSA. The day was closed with the singing of Psalm 16:1,3.

*Synod was adjourned until 9:00am.*

**Day 7 — Morning Session****Tuesday, May 13, 2025****Article 100 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman read Psalm 125, spoke some devotional words, led in opening prayer, and had the meeting sing Psalm 125. He observed that all synod members were present, except Elder Andy Jairam, who was absent with notification for the morning. A welcome was extended to a newly arrived fraternal observer.

**Article 101 – Adoption of acts**

The prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

**Article 102 – HRC – Fraternal Observer Address**

Rev. Marc Jagt introduced Rev. John Procee, credentialed delegate of the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC). Rev. Procee addressed Synod and provided an overview of the HRC. He

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expressed gratitude for our relationship. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 16. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

### **Article 103 – CNST (Needy Students of Theology)**

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on the CNST / CNSF report. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

### **Article 104 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 60 & 81**

Synod went into closed session.

Committee 4 presented draft 2 of a report on an appeal against GS 2022 art. 60 & 81. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

### **Article 105 – CONFIDENTIAL – Personal Appeal 8.6.8.4**

Synod continued in closed session.

*Article not published as per GS 2025 art. 189.*

### **Article 106 – CONFIDENTIAL – Personal Appeal 8.6.8.2**

Synod continued in closed session.

*Article not published as per GS 2025 art. 189.*

### **Article 107 – Personal Appeal 8.6.8.5**

Synod continued in closed session.

Committee 4 presented draft 1 of a report on a personal appeal, agenda item 8.6.8.5. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

Synod returned to open session.

### **Article 108 – ERQ (Reformed Church of Quebec)**

#### **1. Material**

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 4: Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) (8.2.10.4).
- 1.2 Letter from the church at Barrhead (8.3.10.2).

#### **2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

- 2.2 The letter was declared admissible.

Grounds: It interacts with a report to GS 2025 and was received on time.

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### **3. Observations**

3.1 GS 2022 (art. 160) decided:

- [3.1] To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in Quebec (ERQ) under the adopted rules;
- [3.2] To encourage the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects;
- [3.3] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.3.1] To maintain contact with the ERQ according to the adopted rules;
  - [3.3.2] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 The ERQ continues to uphold the Reformed confessions and maintains a faithful witness in a challenging cultural context;
- 3.2.2 The CER has maintained contact with the ERQ and attended its synodical meetings;
- 3.2.3 The relationship remains positive and mutually encouraging.

3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To express thankfulness to the Lord for the faithfulness of the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ);
- 3.3.2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.3 To continue to encourage the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects;
- 3.3.4 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.4.1 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the ERQ to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

3.4 The Barrhead CanRC requests that the CER be mandated to raise the issue of women deacons.

### **4. Considerations**

- 4.1 The Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) remains a faithful Reformed church with whom fellowship is both appropriate and beneficial.
- 4.2 The ERQ appreciates the ongoing contributions from the CanRC both in terms of human as well as financial resources.
- 4.3 The Barrhead CanRC neglects GS 2016 art. 59 cons. 3.4 which said “Discussion of these issues [i.e. differences that were noted and discussed prior to, but do not hinder, EF] may take place naturally in the course of EF, but a specific mandate, identifying particular issues, need not be given.”

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To express thankfulness to the Lord for the faithfulness of the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ);
- 5.2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.3 To continue to encourage the churches to support the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects;
- 5.4 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.4.1 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

## ADOPTED

### Article 109 – KPCA-K (Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin)

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 7: Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin (KPCA-K) (8.2.10.7).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 163) decided:

- [3.1] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
    - [3.1.1] To continue dialogue with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K) where feasible, with a view to getting to know the KPCA-K better over time;
    - [3.1.2] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

- 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 Geographic presence: The KPCA-K is predominantly located in the USA. Currently, their website lists seven congregations in Canada: Toronto (3), Waterloo (1), Edmonton (1), and New Westminster/Surrey (2). Some of these congregations are quite small;
  - 3.2.2 The denomination remains predominantly Korean speaking. However, the CanRC has been blessed with the addition of Korean-speaking ministers to our federation, which could aid future communication;
  - 3.2.3 The KPCA-K is a member church of NAPARC and has close sister-church relationships with the KPCK (“mother church” in Korea). Our relationship with

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the KPCK has experienced renewed vigour (see report), which makes renewed contact with the KPCA-K here in North America realistic.

3.3 The CER recommends:

- 3.3.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin (KPCA-K) according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To convey this decision to the KPCA-K and attempt renewed contact with the KPCA-K through the regular NAPARC meetings;
  - 3.3.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the KPCA-K to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

**4. Considerations**

- 4.1 The CER's interactions with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America - Kosin (KPCA-K) have been positive and constructive.
- 4.2 The KPCA-K is a member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).

**5. Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin (KPCA-K) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To convey this decision to the Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin (KPCA-K) and attempt renewed contact with the KPCA-K through the regular North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) meetings;
  - 5.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the KPCA-K to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

**Article 110 – KPCK (Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea)**

**1. Material**

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 18: Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (8.2.10.18).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 144) decided:

- [3.1] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) under the adopted rules;

[3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

- [3.2.1] To continue to work cooperatively with sister churches in exercising our relationship with the KPCK in meaningful ways and to take turns visiting the KPCK's General Assembly;
- [3.2.2] To meet with their delegates at the next International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC);
- [3.2.3] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 The relationship between the KPCK and CanRC has intensified over the last several years.
- 3.2.2 The transition of Rev. Park into a CanRC church went very smoothly.
- 3.2.3 While the KPCK remains strongly orthodox in confession, the mega-church movement has somewhat impacted their ecclesiology. Mega-churches do exist and seem to have a strong influence over the direction of the federation.
- 3.2.4 Many Koreans continue to immigrate to Canada. This has resulted in various Korean families seeking membership in local Canadian Reformed Churches.
- 3.2.5 The KPCK's growing interaction with the OPC and FRCA, along with the CanRC, can serve as a source for mutual blessing and evidence of Christ's world-wide church gathering work.
- 3.2.6 Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or practices.

3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To express thankfulness for the new vigour in our relationship;
- 3.3.2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.3.1 To continue to work cooperatively with sister churches in exercising our relationship with the KPCK in meaningful ways and to take turns visiting the KPCK's General Assembly;
  - 3.3.3.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the KPCK to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) has shown increased interest in the relationship, and we have been blessed by Korean-speaking pastors and church members in our midst, e.g. Revs. Lee, Park, and Shin.
- 4.2 We have a long-standing relationship with the KPCK, they remain faithful to the Word of God, and there is a new vigour in our relationship which can be mutually beneficial.
- 4.3 The growing interaction of the KPCK with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA), along with the CanRC, is useful in exercising our relationship in a cooperative manner.

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## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To express thankfulness for the new vigour in our relationship;
- 5.2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.3.1 To continue to work cooperatively with sister churches, namely the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA), in exercising our relationship with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) in meaningful ways and to take turns with them visiting the KPCK's General Assembly;
  - 5.3.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the KPCK to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

## ADOPTED

### Article 111 – URCNA (United Reformed Churches in North America)

Committee 2 presented draft 2 of a report on the CER Report 13: United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

### Article 112 – FCS (Free Church of Scotland)

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 21: Free Church of Scotland (FCS) (8.2.10.21).
- 1.2 Letter from Glanbrook (Trinity) (8.3.10.27).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.  
Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.
- 2.2 The letter was declared admissible.  
Grounds: It interacts with a report sent to GS 2025 and was received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 134) decided:

- [3.1] To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) under the adopted rules.
- [3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER).
  - [3.2.1] To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches)
  - [3.2.2] To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years.

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[3.2.3] To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 The FCS is very focused and intent on sharing the gospel throughout Scotland;
- 3.2.2 For various reasons, relationships with other churches outside the country does not appear to be a priority currently;
- 3.2.3 Discussions will continue at opportune times on differing church polity or practices. It will be appropriate to carefully observe how the FCS continues to honor its historical legacy by remaining faithful to their confessions and church order. It will be good to learn from their struggles in a similar secularized context.

3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches);
  - 3.3.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FCS to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

3.4 The Glanbrook (Trinity) CanRC raises a concern that the FCS maintains a relationship with the GKV (now NGK) and the CER does not address this.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 As far as can be determined, the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) continues to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ. Although the distances are great, financial costs are substantial, and there has been limited contact and interaction since a relationship was established, it is appropriate to continue the relationship with the FCS as Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B.
- 4.2 With increased globalization, it is good to have interactions with the FCS to learn from their struggles in a similar secularized context. Continued contact can be experienced in bilateral exchanges in settings other than FCS General Assemblies.
- 4.3 The concern of the Glanbrook (Trinity) CanRC is valid, however, the FCS's continuing relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherland – liberated (GKV) (now NGK) is not an endorsement, but a result of a preoccupation with the Scottish context. Their ecumenical contact committee has acknowledged that it would be appropriate to take another look at their various relations and probably recategorize some churches.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) to:

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- 5.2.1 Raise concerns with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) regarding its ongoing relationship with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv; now NGK);
- 5.2.2 Continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches) and express our desire to intensify our relationship;
- 5.2.3 Submit its report on its activities with respect to the FCS to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

**Article 113 – FCC (Free Church of Scotland (Continuing))**

**1. Material**

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 22: Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) (8.2.10.22).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 135) decided:

- [3.1] To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) under the adopted rules.
- [3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER).
  - [3.2.1] To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches).
  - [3.2.2] To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years.
  - [3.2.3] To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

- 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 FCC continues to monitor developments in The Netherlands with a particular focus on the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CGKN);
- 3.2.2 The FCC commissioners informally indicated it is not likely that our relationship can be expected to intensify. They wondered whether continuing the triennial visitation protocol was a stewardly use of our financial resources. Nonetheless, they are very appreciative of the role that the CanRC have played at the ICRC and look forward to dialoguing with us again in future ICRC meetings;
- 3.2.3 The FCC is thankful for the rich ecclesiastical heritage they have been given and has a strong desire to pass that very heritage on to the next generation. It will be

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good for us to continue in relationship with them as they navigate their way forward in such a challenging context.

3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches);
  - 3.3.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FCC to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

**4. Considerations**

- 4.1 As far as can be determined, the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) continues to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ. Although the distances are great, financial costs are substantial, and there has been limited contact and interaction since a relationship was established, it is appropriate to continue the relationship with the FCS as Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B.
- 4.2 With increased globalization, it is good to have interactions with the FCC to learn from their struggles in a similar secularized context. Continued contact can be experienced in bilateral exchanges in settings other than FCC General Assemblies.

**5. Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To continue personal contact with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches) and express our desire to intensify our relationship;
  - 5.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FCC to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

*Synod was adjourned.*

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**Day 7 — Evening Session**  
**Tuesday, May 13, 2025**

**Article 114 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session at 7:00pm. The Chairman extended a welcome to all present in the building. He had the meeting sing Hymn 77. He observed that all synod members were present.

**Article 115 – Overtures RSE 2024 and RSW 2024 re CO art. 55 (*Songs*)**

**1. Material**

- 1.1 Overture re: CO art. 55 from RSE 2024, forwarded by Classis Central Ontario and originating from the Burlington (Fellowship) CanRC (8.4.2.2).
- 1.2 Overture re: CO art. 55 from RSW 2024 (Classis Pacific West), submitted by the Langley CanRC (8.4.3.2).
- 1.3 Overture re: CO art. 55 from RSW 2024 (Classis Pacific East), submitted by the Aldergrove CanRC (8.4.3.3).
- 1.4 Letters from the following churches: Abbotsford (Pathway) (8.5.5.1) Ancaster (8.5.5.2, 8.5.5.3, 8.5.5.4, 8.5.5.5, 8.5.5.6, 8.5.5.7, 8.5.5.8), Arthur (8.5.5.9), Attercliffe (8.5.5.10), Barrhead (8.5.5.11), Brampton (Grace) (8.5.5.12), Burlington (Fellowship) (8.5.5.13), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) (8.5.5.14), Caledonia (8.5.5.15, 8.5.5.16, 8.5.5.17), Calgary (8.5.5.18, 8.5.5.19, 8.5.5.20), Carman East (8.5.5.21, 8.5.5.22, 8.5.5.23), Carman West (8.5.5.24, 8.5.5.25), Chilliwack (8.5.5.26), Coaldale (8.5.5.27, 8.5.5.28, 8.5.5.29), Dunnville East (8.5.5.30), Dunnville West (8.5.5.31), Edmonton (Immanuel) (8.5.5.32), Edmonton (Providence) (8.5.5.33), Elm Creek (8.5.5.34, 8.5.5.35), Fergus (Maranatha) (8.5.5.36), Fergus North (8.5.5.37, 8.5.5.38, 8.5.5.39), Flamborough (Redemption) (8.5.5.40), Grand Rapids (8.5.5.41), Grand Valley (8.5.5.42), Grassie (Covenant) (8.5.5.43, 8.5.5.44, 8.5.5.45), Guelph (Emmanuel) (8.5.5.46), Guelph (Living Word) (8.5.5.47), Hamilton (Cornerstone) (8.5.5.48, 8.5.5.49, 8.5.5.50), Hamilton (Providence) (8.5.5.51), Houston (8.5.5.52, 8.5.5.53, 8.5.5.54), Lincoln (Vineyard) (8.5.5.55), Kerwood (Grace) (8.5.5.56), London (Pilgrim) (8.5.5.57), Lynden (8.5.5.58, 8.5.5.59, 8.5.5.60), Neerlandia (8.5.5.61), Niagara South (8.5.5.62, 8.5.5.63), Nooksack Valley (8.5.5.64), Orangeville (8.5.5.65), Ottawa (Jubilee) (8.5.5.66), Owen Sound (8.5.5.67), Sardis (8.5.5.68), Smithers [and Prince George (Messiah)] (8.5.5.69), Smithville (8.5.5.70), St. Albert (8.5.5.71, 8.5.5.72, 8.5.5.73), Toronto (Bethel) (8.5.5.74), Vernon (8.5.5.75), Willoughby Heights (8.5.5.76), Winnipeg (Grace) (8.5.5.77), Yarrow (8.5.5.78).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The overtures were declared admissible.  
Grounds: They were submitted by regional synods and were received on time.
- 2.2 The letters from the churches were declared admissible.  
Grounds: They interact with overtures submitted to GS 2025 and were received on time.
- 2.3 Although this matter was dealt with before at GS 2010 Reports vol 1 pp 136-144 (Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO)); RSE 2018 art. 8; GS 2019 art. 130 as an appeal

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against the decision of RSE 2018, Synod notes that the PJCO and its supporting reports have only been provisionally adopted (GS 2010) and are not in effect since we have not achieved federative unity. Also, in its decision, GS 2019 art. 130 cons. 4.1, 4.2. put the onus on the appellant to make historical arguments part of any future submission. GS 2019 also considered that this matter should be dealt with by way of an overture and not an appeal. The current overture re: CO art. 55 (RSE 2024) includes extensive historical arguments and has come to Synod as an overture, not an appeal.

### 3. Observations

#### 3.1 Overture to GS 2025 by RSE 2024:

To amend CO art. 55 as follows:

“In the churches, the 150 psalms and hymns approved by Synod shall be sung in public worship. Hymns and alternate psalm renditions that faithfully reflect the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity may be sung in public worship, provided they are approved by the Consistory.”

RSE also included the following recommendations with their overture:

- 3.1.1 That the proposed revision of CO Art. 55 include a provision that articulates the historic emphasis of the principal place of the Psalms in corporate worship.
- 3.1.2 That the proposed revision of CO Art. 55 include a clause directing local churches to seek concurring advice at Classis before incorporating songs in the worship service that are not approved by General Synod.

#### 3.2 Overture to GS 2025 by RSW 2024 (CPE):

To amend CO Art. 55 as follows:

General Synod shall adopt metrical versions of the Psalms and shall approve Hymns for inclusion in a song book. These Psalms and Hymns, together with their melodies, shall have the principal place in the song of the church as it gathers for corporate worship.”

#### 3.3 Overture to GS 2025 by RSW 2024 (CPW):

To amend CO Art. 55 as follows:

The metrical Psalms adopted by general synod as well as hymns that faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, and are approved by the consistory, shall be sung in the worship services.

- 3.4 All three overtures propose that local consistories be given discretion to approve additional songs for public worship, while retaining the *Book of Praise*.
- 3.5 The overtures differ in wording but share a common intent: to assert the authority of the consistory (local elders) over the song of the church. The RSE overture emphasizes the biblical primacy of consistory’s authority; RSW (CPE) proposes the *Book of Praise* retain the “principal place” while allowing local additions; and RSW (CPW) emphasizes that hymns need to be in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity.

#### 3.6. From RSE 2024 Overture (8.4.2.2), the following:

- 3.6.1 The original overture proposes that the current wording of CO art. 55 be changed to reflect the responsibility of the local consistory to safeguard the doctrine of the church, to return to the historic practice of the Reformed churches, to reflect the

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church polity in many of our sister churches, and to respect the particular challenges, demands and context of the local churches and church plants.

3.6.2 The original overture provides the following grounds to recommend a change to CO Art. 55.

**3.6.2.1. To reflect the responsibility of the local consistory to safeguard the doctrine of the church:**

3.6.2.1.1 The objective of this overture is to demonstrate that the local consistory has the primary authority and biblical responsibility for safeguarding the doctrinal integrity of the teaching, preaching and singing in the local church, and not to discuss which body has the greater ability.

3.6.2.1.2 The wording of CO Art. 55 gives Synod an authority over the local consistory that, biblically speaking, does not rightfully belong to it.

3.6.2.1.3 According to Scripture, local elders are expected to safeguard the doctrine of the church as men who must give an account to God (Titus 1:9, 1 Timothy 3:2, Hebrews 13:17).

3.6.2.1.4 The biblical responsibility for doctrinal faithfulness does certainly include oversight over the doctrinal integrity of the songs sung in corporate worship.

**3.6.2.2 To return to the historic practice of the Reformed Churches:**

3.6.2.2.1 The current wording of CO Art. 55 does not reflect the historic practice of the church.

3.6.2.2.2 From the mid-1500s to the 1930s, Reformed synods defended and upheld the primary authority and biblical responsibility of the local elders over the congregational worship and singing.

3.6.2.2.3 These assemblies favoured exclusive Psalm singing, while consistently recognizing the freedom of local consistories to determine which melodies and rhymings of the psalms were sung.

3.6.2.2.4 It was not until the Synod of Middleburg 1933 that the Church Order was amended to include the language “approved by Synod.” Over time the concept of synodical approval began to take root and was applied not only to the adoption of hymns, but also to the melodies and rhyming of the psalms used in the churches.

**3.6.2.3. To reflect the church polity common in many of our sister churches:**

3.6.2.3.1 The RCUS, the URCNA, and the OPC in their church orders or directories continue to maintain the historic Reformed position that recognizes the primary authority and biblical responsibility of the local consistory with respect to songs sung in public worship.

3.6.2.3.2 The practice of our sister churches has not compromised their doctrinal integrity or the faithfulness of the songs sung in public worship.

3.6.2.3.3 The proposed revision to CO Art. 55 would allow the Canadian Reformed Churches to return to biblical and historical principles of Reformed church polity consistent with our sister churches.

3.6.2.3.4 The proposed revision would overcome obstacles to close formal unity.

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**3.6.2.4. The particular challenges, demands, and context presented by the overture:**

- 3.6.2.4.1 By modifying the wording of CO Art. 55, the Church Order would recognize the particular challenges faced by churches and church plants who may be ministering in a context that would benefit from the freedom to select certain songs outside of the *Book of Praise*.
- 3.6.2.4.2 When the Canadian Reformed Churches were first established in Canada, they wanted their worship to be understandable and accessible within the broader North American context.
- 3.6.2.4.3 GS 1965 specifically stated that the deputies for an English Calvinistic Psalter “not be restricted to Genevan tunes but be authorised to use other melodies which are in harmony with the purpose of congregational singing in the church service.”
- 3.6.2.4.4 In their report to GS 1968, the deputies responded by stating that they had chosen not to avail themselves of the freedom given by GS 1965 to consider non-Genevan melodies.
- 3.6.2.4.5 Despite the repeated concerns raised by subsequent synods, the deputies were determined to press forward with an exclusive Genevan Psalter.
- 3.6.2.4.6 The concerns brought forward by the first synods remain as valid today as when they were first raised, particularly in the setting of church plants and mission settings.
- 3.6.2.4.7 These concerns are increasingly felt by Canadian Reformed Churches who are striving to share the gospel in major urban city centres.
- 3.6.2.4.8 The current process of seeking synodical approval is tedious and overly complicated.
- 3.6.2.4.9 These concerns have led the Burlington-Fellowship consistory to supplement their worship by allowing the selection of faithful, biblical psalms and hymns better known in our North American context to be used as “gathering” and “parting” songs.

3.6.3 In addition, RSE 2024 made the following observations and considerations about the original overture:

- 3.6.3.1 RSE 2024 notes that each consistory has previously voluntarily exercised this authority by deciding to cooperate with other churches in this matter by way of the Church Order, including CO Art. 55.
- 3.6.3.2 RSE 2024 believes that although the local elders are expected to have the ability and are given the primary authority and biblical responsibility over matters of corporate worship, this authority is best exercised by seeking the wisdom of many counsellors (Prov 11:14, 15:22) by directing local churches to seek concurring advice at Classis before incorporating songs into the worship service.
- 3.6.3.3 RSE 2024 agrees with the original overture that prior to 1933, local churches had some freedom to choose between collections of psalms. Historically, Synods have regulated the source texts (the 150 Psalms, various parts of Scripture, the creeds) but not the versifications or melodies.

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- 3.6.3.4 RSE 2024 would like GS 2025 to include a provision that emphasizes the principal place of the Psalms in corporate worship.
- 3.6.3.5 RSE 2024 recognizes that uniformity is not the same as the spiritual unity that we enjoy in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Revelation 7:9).
- 3.6.3.6 RSE 2024 acknowledges the particular challenges faced by various churches in their local context (church plants, diverse ethnic backgrounds, different languages).
- 3.6.3.7 RSE 2024 acknowledges that while the biblical faithfulness of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter is respected, the tunes are not universally appreciated.

3.7 From the RSW 2024 (Classis Pacific East) Overture (8.4.3.2), the following:

- 3.7.1 RSW notes that from the beginning of their history, the Reformed churches of The Netherlands and the Canadian Reformed churches have both considered the song of the church a matter to be dealt with by the churches in common.
- 3.7.2 RSW argues that the assumption that the song of the churches should be regulated by the broader assemblies has not been critically examined.

3.7.3 **RSW presented the following arguments for a common song book:**

- 3.7.3.1 Having a *Book of Praise* approved by the general synod may act as a unifying force among the Canadian Reformed churches.
- 3.7.3.2 Restricting the song of the churches to a fixed collection may contribute to familiarity and excellence in singing.
- 3.7.3.3 Having a synodically approved *Book of Praise* may provide a layer of protection against hymns or other songs which may degrade the churches because of deficiencies in their teaching/content or in their musical style.
- 3.7.3.4 Restricting the number of hymns and other songs will likely lead to greater familiarity with the Psalms.

3.7.4 **RSW noted the following difficulties related to CO art. 55**

- 3.7.4.1 Limiting the singing of the Psalms to settings with Genevan melodies seems needlessly restrictive, especially in this time of increasing multiculturalism and ecclesiastical connectivity.
- 3.7.4.2 The current application of CO Art. 55 limits connectivity with North American sister churches in congregational singing, creating a degree of isolation.
- 3.7.4.3 CO Art. 55 (and the corresponding PJCO article) might be a stumbling block to federative unity with the URCNA.
- 3.7.4.4 CO Art. 55 prevents the singing in corporate worship of many excellent, biblically grounded, and well-known hymns and Christian songs.
- 3.7.4.5 Restricting the song of the church to the Genevan Psalms and a relatively small list of hymns approved by general synod could make it more difficult for people coming to the Canadian Reformed churches from other Christian backgrounds.

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- 3.7.4.6 Restricting the churches to singing psalms only with Genevan melodies may be hindering the broader use of the Psalms in corporate worship. There are psalms which are rarely sung because of difficulty with the Genevan melody.
- 3.7.4.7 Local elders should be seen as capable of establishing guidelines for the approval of songs for corporate worship. Leaving such matters largely to a general synod may discourage a strong sense of local responsibility for the worship of the church.
- 3.7.4.8 Because of the diverse membership and missional goals of some of our churches, there should be greater local freedom in the choice of songs.
- 3.7.4.9 The *Book of Praise* should not be a stumbling block for receiving other churches into our federation (for example: Sudanese, Chinese, or Korean churches).
- 3.7.4.10 Our current process of seeking to have new songs included in a synodically approved songbook is tedious and cost-prohibitive.

### 3.7.5 RSW listed the practices of some of our North American sister churches

- 3.7.5.1 Churches such as the RCUS, OPC, and URCNA do not mandate synodically-limited collections of metrical Psalms and Hymns.
  - 3.7.5.1.1 The Constitution of the RCUS does not contain any mandates for the song of the church. The RCUS Directory for Public Worship states: “Since the metrical versions of the Psalms are based upon the Word of God, they ought to be used frequently in public worship. Great care must be taken to ensure that all the materials of song are in complete accord with the teaching of Holy Scripture. The tunes as well as the words should be dignified and Public Worship elevated. The stately rhythm of the chorales is especially appropriate for public worship.”
  - 3.7.5.1.2 Article 39 of the Church Order of the United Reformed Churches of North America stipulates the following: “Psalms and Hymns. The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. Hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity may be sung, provided they are approved by the Consistory.”
  - 3.7.5.1.3 In its Directory for the Public Worship of God, the OPC specifies the following for the guidance of the churches: (1) Congregations do well to sing the metrical versions or other musical settings of the Psalms frequently in public worship. Congregations also do well to sing hymns of praise that respond to the full scope of divine revelation. (2) In the choice of song for public worship, great care must be taken that all the materials of song are fully in accord with the Scriptures. The words are to be suitable for the worship of God and the tunes are to be appropriate to the meaning of the words and to the occasion of public worship. Care should be taken to the end that the songs chosen will express those specific truths and sentiments which are appropriate at the time of their use in the worship service.

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- 3.7.5.2 RSW noted that among our sister churches in North America, there is no evidence to suggest that the freedom the local churches enjoy in choosing songs for worship has led to a decline in Reformed doctrine or life.
- 3.7.6 RSW believes that giving the Psalms and Hymns adopted by general synod the “principal place” in the song of the church will serve to maintain unity in public worship throughout our federation, while allowing churches which want to include some new songs to do so.
- 3.7.7 RSW asserts that their proposal recognizes that the song of the church is a matter for the churches in common while leaving room for diversity among the churches.
- 3.7.8 RSW noted that this overture does not address the matter of the Psalms having a predominant place in worship.

3.8 From RSW 2024 Overture (Classis Pacific West) (8.4.3.3), the following:

- 3.8.1 The overture notes that for fifty years, the metrical psalms adopted by our general synods of 1971 and 2013 have been synonymous with the 150 Psalms in the Anglo-Genevan Psalter.
- 3.8.2 The overture argues that, given the love that remains for the Anglo-Genevan Psalter and the unifying effect it has had, we should take care to ensure our present psalter is preserved for the foreseeable future.
- 3.8.3 The overture states that since 1965, the Canadian Reformed churches shifted from the original polity of Dort which limited hymns to a small handful of songs of Scripture as found in the New Testament to also include hymns that are in harmony with the Word of God. They believe this shift was warranted in light of the apostolic command that the churches “address one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (Ephesians 5:19).
- 3.8.4 The overture provides the following grounds for having consistory approve these hymns and spiritual songs instead of general synod:
  - 3.8.4.1 Local elders have oversight over all matters relating to worship, including the song of the church.
  - 3.8.4.2 Requiring general synod to approve all hymns for worship places an undue burden on some local churches and is causing tension within the federation. Some churches are seeking more flexibility in song selection due to factors like diverse membership, or specific mission goals, leading some to reinterpret the “worship service” to only what happens between the greeting and the benediction (allowing for ‘gathering’ and ‘sending’ songs). Similarly, events on special days like Good Friday and Christmas are no longer classified as worship services, simply to escape the strictures of CO Art. 55.
- 3.8.5 The overture noted that just because some churches will be able to sing other hymns if this proposal is adopted, they are by no means required to do so.
- 3.8.6 The overture noted that maintaining the current CO Art. 55 prevents the singing in corporate worship of many excellent, biblically grounded and well-known hymns and Christian songs.

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3.8.7 The overture suggests that the addition and subtraction of hymns by general synod from our common songbook (*Book of Praise*) is not sustainable or fiscally responsible.

3.8.8 The overture notes that other churches in North America with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship and who have jointly published a psalter-hymnal (the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*) nevertheless leave the decision of what is sung in the churches within the province of the local consistory or session.

3.8.9 RSW notes that this overture also does not address the matter of the Psalms having a predominant place in worship.

3.9 From the letters of the churches concerning all three overtures, the following:

3.9.1 **On our current practice:**

3.9.1.1 The local consistory has the biblical responsibility and primary authority for safeguarding the worship of the local church (Orangeville, Ottawa (Jubilee), and others).

3.9.1.2 CO art. 55 has been a wise way of organizing and collectively overseeing the content of the songs used in the federation (Ancaster, Fergus North, Grand Rapids, Hamilton (Cornerstone), Houston, London (Pilgrim), Orangeville, St. Albert and more). The Ancaster CanRC maintains that the overtures must argue against the wisdom of the article and demonstrate how a change would be a better and wiser way to proceed.

3.9.1.3 Some churches assert that adopting one of these overtures will render the hymn cap established by GS 2004 moot (Kerwood (Grace), Ancaster). The Burlington (Fellowship) CanRC believes that the tension and debate around the hymn cap would be alleviated and greater unity experienced by adopting one of these overtures.

3.9.1.4 Some churches note there is no pressure or desire for change or for adding more songs (Carman East, Grassie (Covenant)).

3.9.1.5 Many churches believe that selection by general synod is a safeguard (Arthur, Attercliffe, Barrhead, Calgary, Coaldale, Elm Creek, Fergus (Maranatha), Grand Valley, Guelph (Living Word), Lincoln (Vineyard), Lynden, Neerlandia, Nooksack Valley).

3.9.1.6 Historically, hymn singing has always been governed by general synods (Orangeville).

3.9.1.7 The Dunville East CanRC states that what the church prays (or sings) is what the church believes.

3.9.1.8 Ancaster argues that the current church order does not have to be changed to allow the singing of the psalms to other melodies.

3.9.1.9 The Carman West CanRC believes there is no scriptural reason to change CO art. 55.

3.9.1.10 The Caledonia CanRC states that this is a “matter for the churches in common to seek agreement on”.

3.9.1.11 Changing CO art. 55 would be a blessing to various churches in multi-cultural or multi-lingual settings (Hamilton (Provident), Owen Sound,

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Toronto (Bethel)). Our current CO art. 55 has hampered mission work (Winnipeg (Grace)).

- 3.9.1.12 Other churches are not convinced that there is a cultural barrier (Lynden, Orangeville, Willoughby Heights).
- 3.9.1.13 Songs used in worship ought to “faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of the Scriptures as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity” (Willoughby Heights).

**3.9.2 On a common song book:**

- 3.9.2.1 The *Book of Praise* is a unifying force (Arthur, Calgary, Carman West, Chilliwack). The churches are mutually edified by having a collective book (Caledonia, Hamilton (Cornerstone), Lynden) built on common principles and guidelines (Carman East).
- 3.9.2.2 Some churches believe that changing CO art. 55 will cause disunity (Chilliwack, St. Albert) or fracture the federation (Grand Rapids, Guelph (Living Word), Niagara South, Nooksack Valley, Orangeville, Smithville, Yarrow).
- 3.9.2.3 Some churches assert that creating a collection of songs is too big a task for a local church (Arthur, Grand Valley).
- 3.9.2.4 Various churches suggest that the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) has more specific expertise (Carman East, Chilliwack, Coaldale, Elm Creek, Lynden, Niagara South, Smithville, Yarrow and more).
- 3.9.2.5 Some churches (Caledonia, Carman East) agree with RSE regarding the merit of working together with common principles and guidelines in the selection of songs for worship. The Edmonton (Immanuel) CanRC suggests General Synod provide parameters and principles to help guide local consistories in the selection of songs for worship.
- 3.9.2.6 The Ancaster CanRC notes that some limit on the number of songs will always be placed on the churches, whether in principle or in practice. Also, the overtures do not deal with the decision of 2004 re: hymn cap (Ancaster, Attercliffe).
- 3.9.2.7 Several churches note that restricting the songs used in worship leads to familiarity and enrichment of worship (Arthur, Attercliffe, Lynden, Neerlandia).
- 3.9.2.8 The Edmonton (Providence) CanRC agrees with the overtures that changing the *Book of Praise* is tedious, while the Carman East CanRC believes that having the local church supervise the song of the church would be tedious. Some believe change is happening at a slow, deliberate pace (Fergus (Maranatha), Lincoln (Vineyard)), while others believe change is happening too slowly (Edmonton (Providence)).
- 3.9.2.9 Some churches assert that uniformity of song promotes unity of faith (Fergus (Maranatha), Fergus North, Lincoln (Vineyard)). Other churches note that unity of faith does not demand uniformity of song (Brampton (Grace), Sardis,

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Smithers, Toronto (Bethel), Winnipeg (Grace)). We are Canadian Reformed out of our desire to be faithful, not out of our desire to be distinct (Smithers). Our unity is a unity of faith and faithfulness (Winnipeg (Grace)).

3.9.2.10 Various churches speak of the desire to allow freedom of the local church (with some sort of oversight) (Hamilton (Providence), Edmonton (Providence)) while the *Book of Praise* remains the songbook of the Federation (Owen Sound).

**3.9.3 On the authority and ability of the local church:**

3.9.3.1 Regulating the song of the church via our broadest assembly does not negate the primary authority of the local church (Fergus North, Kerwood (Grace), Neerlandia). Some churches believe the overtures set up a false dilemma between the authority of the local church and the broadest assembly (Lynden, Niagara South). Various churches mention that the overture of RSE does not recognize that CO art. 76 is not a matter of synod lording it over others but of common consent (Attercliffe).

3.9.3.2 Churches suggest that elders who supervise the preaching of the Word should be capable of ensuring the orthodoxy of the songs of the church (Ottawa (Jubilee), Sardis, Guelph (Living Word)).

3.9.3.3 The Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC argues that the requirement added by RSE 2024 to add approval by classis simply replaces the role of general synod with classis and thus negates the principle of the authority of the local church, integral to the original overture.

3.9.3.4 The Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC believes that requiring approval of classis for hymns sung in worship could bog down classis and suggests a lack of trust. Other churches agree with mandating classical approval (e.g. Hamilton (Providence)).

3.9.3.5 The Vernon CanRC says the consistory of the local congregation is best suited to choose the hymns sung in the local church.

3.9.3.6 Some churches note that the overtures appropriately recognize the authority of the local consistory (Sardis, Smithers).

**3.9.4 On the singing of the psalms:**

3.9.4.1 Some churches note that the overtures show no consideration for the principle of the predominance of psalm singing (Ancaster, Attercliffe, Caledonia, Chilliwack, Coaldale and more).

3.9.4.2 Many churches insist that the psalms are to have the principal place (Elm Creek, Grand Valley, London (Pilgrim), Owen Sound, and more). Historically, the Reformed church has been a predominantly psalm-singing church (St. Albert, Willoughby Heights).

3.9.4.3 The Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC argues that RSE 2024's recommendation to add that "the psalms are to have the principal place in the worship of the church" is not germane to the original overture.

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- 3.9.4.4 Some churches note that the language of “principal place,” either for the psalms or a song book, is imprecise and open to interpretation (Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth), Edmonton (Immanuel)).
- 3.9.4.5 Some churches suggest that singing the psalms would be encouraged if there were a variety of melodies available to the churches (Brampton (Grace), Fergus North).
- 3.9.4.6 Reformed churches have had the freedom to select alternate renditions of the psalms (Burlington (Fellowship)).
- 3.9.4.7 The Dunnville East CanRC wonders if it is appropriate to regulate that the majority of the church’s praises should be from the Old Covenant.
- 3.9.4.8 The Guelph (Living Word) CanRC believes that singing more hymns may result in less psalm singing.
- 3.9.4.9 The Edmonton (Providence) CanRC asserts there is a shortage of hymns to respond fully to the work of our Triune God.

**3.9.5 On the Anglo-Genevan Psalter:**

- 3.9.5.1 Some churches state that the Genevan tunes are high quality and well-suited for singing the psalms (Carman East, Fergus (Maranatha), Neerlandia).
- 3.9.5.2 The Niagara South CanRC says the Anglo-Genevan psalter has historic and traditional significance and changing this practice could erode the shared heritage and identity of the federation. Other churches note that while the *Book of Praise* is valuable and unique, we ought not to hold it out as a cultural distinctive that separates us from other true churches in North America (Winnipeg (Grace), Smithers, and more).
- 3.9.5.3 GS 1962 and GS 1965 mandated the deputies for an English Psalter not to restrict themselves to the Genevan melodies (Burlington (Fellowship)).
- 3.9.5.4 Some churches share that newcomers find the Genevan tunes a challenge (Abbotsford (Pathway), Smithers) while others did not have this experience (Willoughby Heights). The difficulty of the Genevan tunes is a subjective matter (Grand Rapids).

**3.9.6 On other federations with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship:**

- 3.9.6.1 Some churches assert that changing CO art. 55 is not necessary for federative unity (Fergus (Maranatha), Grand Rapids, Lincoln (Vineyard), Lynden), while others assert that CO art. 55 in its current form is a barrier (Sardis).
- 3.9.6.2 The Winnipeg (Grace) CanRC notes that our sister churches, the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), United Reformed Church in North America (URCNA), all recommend the use of a synodically sanctioned song book, but none mandate its exclusiveness.
- 3.9.6.3 The Kerwood (Grace) CanRC notes that, according to representatives of the OPC and URCNA, there are benefits in having a common songbook.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The song of the church ought to be glorifying to God and in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. Scripture, however, does not prescribe whether the choosing of songs is to be done by the local consistory or by the churches together. There is no scriptural mandate to maintain CO art. 55 as is, nor is there a scriptural mandate to change it.
- 4.2 RSE 2024 and RSW 2024 correctly note that consistory has the primary authority, biblical responsibility, and oversight over all matters relating to corporate worship (Titus 1:9; 1 Timothy 3:2). Churches rightly recognize that elders who supervise the preaching of the Word should be capable of ensuring the orthodoxy of the songs of the church.
- 4.3 Historically, each consistory has “voluntarily exercised its authority in deciding to cooperate with its sister churches by way of the Church Order” (Acts of GS 2022, art. 110 cons. 4.1.2). In the context of CO art. 55, however, a growing number of churches have expressed persistent dissatisfaction with both the pace and scope of the song approval process, as well as with the structure of CO art. 55 itself. The volume and consistency of recent overtures and letters suggest that a change to CO art. 55 may be beneficial (cf. GS 2022, RSW 2021, RSE 2021, GS 2019, RSE 2018, RSW 2018, and more). CO art. 76 states that if the interest of the churches demands such, the articles of the Church Order may and ought to be changed, augmented, or diminished.
- 4.4 While consistories are given the primary authority and biblical responsibility over matters of corporate worship, they can be helped by seeking the wisdom of many counsellors (Proverbs 11:14, 15:22). If individual churches feel that they would benefit from the advice of neighboring churches or other individuals, they are free to seek it. Consistories can also refer to the “Principles and Guidelines for the selection of music in the church” found in the *Acts of GS 2004* (Appendix 2B). RSE 2024 and many churches (Ancaster, Attercliffe, and more) suggest that consistories seek concurring advice at Classis before incorporating additional songs in the worship service. However, for many matters governed by the Church Order, the process of mutual oversight involves church visitation and appeals to classis. CO art. 46 mandates that church visitors are “to inquire whether … the adopted order is being observed and maintained in every respect.” That would apply to CO art. 55 as well.
- 4.5 RSW 2024 notes that from the beginning of their history, the Reformed churches in The Netherlands and the Canadian Reformed Churches have both considered the song of the church to be a matter to be dealt with by the churches in common. RSW 2024 argues that the assumption that the song of the church should be regulated by the churches in common has not been critically examined. RSE 2024 correctly observes that, prior to 1933, consistories had the freedom to choose which psalter to use (melodies, rhymings), but they gloss over the fact that general synods significantly restricted which hymns could be sung.
- 4.6 It is important for the federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches to have a common song book (*Book of Praise*) that includes all 150 Psalms as well as hymns approved for use in the churches because it serves as a unifying force, it contributes to familiarity and excellence in singing, and promotes the foundational role of psalms in the singing of the

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church. The *Book of Praise* should not be changed frequently because doing so is not sustainable or fiscally responsible.

- 4.7 These overtures correctly avoid mentioning the hymn cap, since the hymn cap applied only to the work of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) in the context of the *Book of Praise*.
- 4.8 RSW correctly notes that for fifty years, the psalms adopted by our general synods have been synonymous with the 150 Psalms of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter. Given the love that remains for the Anglo-Genevan Psalter and the unifying effect it has had, we should take care to ensure our present Psalter is preserved.
- 4.9 Since 1965, the Canadian Reformed Churches shifted from the original church polity of Dort, which limited hymns to a small handful of scriptural songs, to include many hymns that are in harmony with the Word of God (Ephesians 5:19). There are many excellent, biblically grounded, and well-known hymns and Christian songs which could be sung in corporate worship that are not part of the *Book of Praise*. The Dunville East CanRC correctly states that what the church prays (or sings) is what the church believes. Deformation often goes hand-in-hand with a proliferation of unscriptural songs.
- 4.10 The local consistories/sessions of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) have the freedom to choose songs for worship outside those approved by their synods/general assemblies. Many of our sister churches recognize the use of a synodically-sanctioned songbook, but most do not mandate its exclusiveness. There is no evidence to suggest that the freedom enjoyed by these churches has compromised their doctrinal integrity or faithfulness, nor has it led to disunity.
- 4.11 Changing CO art. 55 as proposed might remove a perceived impediment to unity with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). It would also allow for joint worship services between federations in special circumstances or for special events. It would maintain the freedom currently enjoyed by local churches in the URCNA. Synod URCNA 2007 (art. 65 rec. 8) expressed its “strong preference” for the version of the PJCO article titled “Psalms and Hymns” which reads: “The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful musical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by the consistory in accord with a synodically adopted standard.”
- 4.12 Giving a common song book the principal place in the worship of the church serves the unity of the federation.
- 4.13 The church of our Lord is made up of people from all tribes and peoples and languages (Revelation 7:9). The increasing presence of church plants, ethnic diversity, and even different languages used in worship among the Canadian Reformed Churches demonstrates the need for local freedom in choosing songs for worship. For example, the Toronto (Bethel) CanRC translates sermon summaries into 8 different languages each worship service; the Brampton (Grace) CanRC has some members and many visitors from an East Indian background; most mission plants have membership from diverse cultural backgrounds; and some of our churches support outreach in Sudanese,

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Korean, Chinese, Urdu, Karen (Myanmar), and other languages within Canada. Some established churches have increasing numbers of members who come from non-churched or non-Reformed backgrounds. The suggestion that the *Book of Praise* should have the principal place in worship may not work in contexts such as these. Singing scripturally faithful psalms and hymns should produce praise to God. That happens best when the words and melodies are accessible and familiar, and the selections which work best will vary by congregation. For those reasons, CO art. 55 should include a phrase like “as a rule” to make it clear that the *Book of Praise* will usually, but not always, have the principal place.

- 4.14 While for a large part of its history, the Canadian Reformed Churches experienced significant uniformity, we are now experiencing greater diversity while remaining united. There is a difference between uniformity of practice and unity of faith. We have always recognized that our unity is found in our Lord Jesus Christ and is based on the Word of God as summarized in the Reformed confessions.
- 4.15 The Reformed church, from its inception, has been a psalm-singing church and has recognized the gift the Triune God has given us in the psalms to richly and deeply praise him. Various churches, assemblies, and overtures therefore speak of the primacy or principal place of the psalms in corporate worship.
- 4.16 Some churches, however, question the primacy or principal place of the psalms. The Dunville East CanRC notes that RSE 2021 and RSW 2021 denied overtures to amend CO art. 55 to include this principle and wonders if it is appropriate that the majority of the church’s songs come from the old covenant.
- 4.17 Dunnville East also asserts that this principle of the primacy of the psalms was stated by past assemblies but never substantiated. Various churches argue that the words “principal place” in reference to psalm singing sets an arbitrary metric that is essentially unenforceable (Hamilton Providence, Guelph Living Word).
- 4.18 The Willoughby Heights CanRC insists there ought not to be a distinction between the psalms and rhymed portions of other Scripture passages, and both should be given priority.
- 4.19 The SCBP, in their “Principles and Guidelines for the selection of music in the church” GS 2004 (Appendix 2B Guideline 2), describes the psalms as “foundational.” Dunnville East proposes that this word “foundational” best describes the place of the psalms in the corporate worship of the church.
- 4.20 The Lord has given the psalms to his church to praise his name. The psalms themselves command their use, e.g. “Sing praises with a psalm (maskil)” (Psalm 47:7). The Psalms reveal the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44). For this reason, the New Testament church is commanded to sing the Psalms (Ephesians 5:19) and church members are commanded to teach and admonish one another in part by singing the Psalms (Colossians 3:16).

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To amend CO art. 55 to read:

***The 150 Psalms of the Bible are foundational to the church’s worship and are to be sung frequently in the worship services. General synod shall adopt metrical versions***

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*of the Psalms and shall approve hymns for inclusion in a song book which shall, as a rule, have the principal place in the worship of the church. The consistory may also approve the singing of alternate settings of the Psalms and additional hymns, provided they are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity.*

## ADOPTED

### Article 116 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 105: Hymn Cap

Committee 1 presented draft 1 of a report on an appeal against GS 2022 art. 105 (Hymn Cap). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

### Article 117 – CRTS (Board of Governors)

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

### Article 118 – Overture RSE 2024: Adding a Footnote to the Apostles’ Creed

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Overture from RSE 2024 re Footnote for Apostles’ Creed (8.4.2.1).
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Attercliffe (8.5.1.1), Barrhead (8.5.1.2), Caledonia (8.5.1.3), Calgary (8.5.1.4), Carman East (8.5.1.5), Carman West (8.5.1.6), Chilliwack (8.5.1.7), Cloverdale (8.1.5.8), Edmonton (Immanuel) (8.5.1.9), Elm Creek (8.5.1.10), Fergus (Maranatha) (8.1.5.11), Fergus North (8.1.5.12), Edmonton (Providence) (8.5.1.13), Flamborough (Redemption) (8.5.1.14), Houston (8.5.1.15), Neerlandia (8.5.1.16), Willoughby Heights (8.5.1.17).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The overture was declared admissible.  
Grounds: It was submitted by a regional synod and was received on time.
- 2.2 The letters from the churches were declared admissible.  
Grounds: They interact with an overture submitted to GS 2025 and were received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 RSE 2024 proposes to append an explanatory footnote to “he descended into hell” in the Apostles’ Creed. This phrase has a long history of disputed interpretation. Since this phrase can be easily misunderstood, for example, to mean that Christ went to a specific physical place called hell for three days after he died, the overture seeks to bring clarity by adding a footnote which reads, “These words are not to be understood as if Christ, upon entering death, went to the place of eternal torment called hell. See Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 16, Q/A 44.”
- 3.2 Many churches agree with this overture and support adding this proposed footnote.

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- 3.3 Other churches support a footnote in principle but desire to edit the proposed footnote, while another church (Carman East) doubts the need for a footnote (and finds it clunky) but also proposes an edit to the footnote if that idea is adopted by GS 2025. The following edits are proposed:
  - 3.3.1 The Calgary CanRC would like to delete the first sentence of the footnote since it explicitly rules out one interpretation.
  - 3.3.2 The Carman East CanRC finds the proposed footnote to be confusing which would defeat the purpose of adding a footnote. This church proposes the following footnote instead, “This phrase is intended as a summary of Christ’s humiliation, emphasizing the depth and lowest point of Christ’s suffering.”
  - 3.3.3 The Edmonton (Immanuel) CanRC would prefer that the footnote affirms what the phrase means instead of only what it doesn’t mean.
  - 3.3.4 The Edmonton (Providence) CanRC would like to add to the footnote a reference to the Canons of Dort chapter 2, article 4 as done by the URCNA in the Trinity Psalter Hymnal. The text of that footnote reads, “See Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 44; Canons of Dort, 2.4; Westminster Larger Catechism, Q&A 50.”
  - 3.3.5 The Fergus (Maranatha) CanRC offers the following alternate footnote, “that is, on the cross Jesus suffered the agony of hell which our sins deserve (HC, Q/A 44).”
  - 3.3.6 The Fergus North CanRC offers the following alternate footnote, “that is, he descended into the realm of the dead.”
- 3.4 The Barrhead CanRC and the Neerlandia CanRC are opposed to the overture for four reasons:
  - 3.4.1 There has been no footnote for many years and during all those years the need was never felt to add a footnote. Rather “the Church simply taught what this part of the Creed meant. We believe this is how things ought to continue taking place.”
  - 3.4.2 The Apostles’ Creed is broadly accepted and no other church has added a footnote.
  - 3.4.3 This footnote would create an inconsistency within the creeds since the Athanasian Creed also mentions descending into hell, but no footnote is proposed to explain the descent there.
  - 3.4.4 The Creeds are not meant for visitors but for believers; if visitors have questions, it is a good opportunity for the Church to teach its doctrine.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The phrase “he descended into hell” has had a long history of challenging interpretation in the church. Also in our time, some church members can struggle with the meaning of this phrase, as reflected in some of the letters from the churches. It is good to help them with these struggles in the best way possible. The overture seeks to bring clarity by adding a footnote which reads, “These words are not to be understood as if Christ, upon entering death, went to the place of eternal torment called hell. See Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 16, Q/A 44.”
- 4.2 The letters from the churches propose a multiplicity of alternative suggestions for the content of the footnote, indicating that the adoption of a footnote may result in disagreement among the churches.

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- 4.3 The Barrhead CanRC is incorrect that no other churches have added a footnote since the Trinity Psalter Hymnal, used by the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), has added a very brief footnote, as noted in 3.3.4 (the word “catholic” is also footnoted).
- 4.4 In the life of the church, there are sometimes statements in our creeds and confessions which can be difficult to understand upon first reading. When this happens, it is good for the church to provide more instruction in these matters of faith to help everyone to make progress in their understanding.
- 4.5 It is neither desirable nor feasible to add footnotes to everything which may be difficult to understand upon first reading. There are more expressions in the Apostles’ Creed which might need further explanation such as “catholic” or “only-begotten.”
- 4.6 If a believer has difficulty understanding or accepting the teaching of the Church in LD 16 Q/A 44, the addition of a footnote referring to this confessional explanation will not resolve the issue. The appropriate way to deal with this is through instruction which comes in the preaching, teaching, catechesis, and pastoral work of the Church.
- 4.7 Adding a footnote to one of the most foundational statements and summaries of the Christian faith could convey doubt by the church and create doubt in the reader. The fundamental articles of the Christian faith should be affirmed without qualification or reservation, as reflected by the common practice of the Church of all times and places.

## 5. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 Not to adopt the overture.

## ADOPTED

### Article 119 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 142: Days of Commemoration

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal of Dunnville West against the decision of GS 2022 art. 142 (8.6.2).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The appeal was declared admissible.

Grounds: it is an appeal of a decision of a general synod and was received prior to the deadline.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 The Dunnville West CanRC is appealing the decision of GS 2022 (art. 142) which sustained the appeals of the Flamborough (Redemption) CanRC and the Toronto (Bethel) CanRC and overturned the judgement of RSE 2019 regarding commemorative services.
- 3.2 Dunnville West asserts that the reasoning of GS 2022 — that CO art. 52 and 53 must be read as “distinct for a reason” — is unconvincing and creates a false dilemma. They argue that these articles, being in the same section of the Church Order (“Worship,

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Sacraments and Ceremonies”), must be read in conjunction and seen as complementary rather than isolated from one another.

- 3.3 The appeal highlights the historical context and usage of these articles, noting that the broader Reformed tradition does not distinguish between “commemorative services” and “worship services,” and often refers to special services (e.g., Good Friday) simply as worship services.
- 3.4 Dunnville West objects to the implication of GS 2022 that a commemorative service is not an official worship service but rather an informal gathering, stating that if such were actually the case it would no longer be an ecclesiastical matter under the authority of the consistory (see CO art 30). Dunnville West also cites as an example of the commemorative service being long considered the equivalent of a formal worship service the Church Order of the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (1905) art. 67 which states, “the congregations shall keep besides Sunday, also Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Ascension Day.”
- 3.5 Dunnville West maintains that distinguishing a commemorative service from a worship service is disingenuous because “the sacrament of baptism and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper can and have been held in a commemorative service.” This “. . . underscores the fact that they are official services.”
- 3.6 The appellants argue that the reasoning of GS 2022 relies too heavily on semantics (e.g., “shall call” vs. “invite,” “worship” vs. “commemorate”) rather than the broader ecclesiological and liturgical context.
- 3.7 They express concern that the practice of Flamborough (Redemption) Church “inviting” members and visitors to a commemorative service rather than “calling” them to worship undermines the authority of the consistory and creates confusion about the nature of the gathering. This, in their view, sets a precedent that weakens the Reformed principle of worship and the simplicity of Reformed liturgy.
- 3.8 The appellants therefore request GS 2025 to judge that GS 2022 erred in sustaining the appeals of Flamborough (Redemption) and Toronto (Bethel) and that RSE 2019’s original decision be upheld.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The appeal correctly emphasizes that CO art. 52 and 53 belong to the same section of the Church Order and must be interpreted in relation to one another. While the articles are distinct, their proximity and shared focus on public worship indicate a complementary, not disjunctive, function. CO art. 1 also indicates that CO art. 52 and 53 both fall under the heading of “worship, sacraments and ceremonies.”
- 4.2 The CanRC have historically understood the “days of commemoration” stipulation of CO art. 53 in the context of worship services. This understanding is supported by the reference supplied by the appellant to the 1905 Church Order of the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands. A commentary on the Church Order states: “The first category mentioned Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, and Pentecost. These are all days or events which stand related to events of Christ’s life and activity. Some of these events always fall on Sunday. But whether they fall on Sunday or not, the Church Order here specifies that worship services shall be held in observance of these days or events. Such as fall on Sunday shall be remembered in the Sunday sermon. Such as fall on

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weekdays call for a special worship service in commemoration of the day or event" (M. Monsma, *The New Revised Church Order Commentary*, 1967, p.201-2).

- 4.3 The appeal highlights that services which include the elements of public worship are generally understood to be worship services under consistory oversight (cf. Lord's Day 38, Heidelberg Catechism; see also CO art. 52). When such services are referred to by alternate terminology, this can lead to uncertainty about how they are governed and what expectations apply.
- 4.4 The Dunnville West CanRC has not provided evidence that the sacraments were administered during commemorative events other than worship services.
- 4.5 Churches are free to organize events for the commemoration of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. However, if such events are not worship services, they do not, in themselves, satisfy the directions of CO art. 53. Strictly speaking, they are not ecclesiastical matters (CO art. 30; see also art. 65). As an example, a church might have a "lessons and carols" event to commemorate and celebrate the birth of Christ. Such an event, however beneficial, would not fulfill the expectations of CO art. 53.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To sustain the appeal of the Dunnville West CanRC.

## ADOPTED

G. Boot, R. Bremer, and J. Torenvliet abstained as per CO art. 32.

## Article 120 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 111: Modernization of Hymn Language

### 1. Material

- 1.1 Flamborough (Redemption) appeal re: GS 2022 Art. 111 (8.6.7).

### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The appeal was declared admissible.

Grounds: the appeal is against a decision of a general synod and it was received on time.

### 3. Observations

- 3.1 The Flamborough (Redemption) CanRC appeals the decision of GS 2022 (art. 111) to approve modernized wording for three hymns:

- 3.1.1 "Come, Thou Almighty King" (changed to "Come, O Almighty King");
  - 3.1.2 "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" (changed to "Come, O Fount of Every Blessing");
  - 3.1.3 "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus" (changed to "Come, O Long Expected Jesus").

- 3.2 Flamborough (Redemption) argues that:

- 3.2.1 The traditional wording of these hymns remains standard and beloved in widely used hymnals across the English-speaking world;

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- 3.2.2 Changing the wording unnecessarily disrupts the common memory and classic status of these hymns;
- 3.2.3 The Standing Committee's own guidelines suggest that archaisms should be left intact when they do not hinder understanding and when they preserve a hymn's classic status;
- 3.2.4 Other hymns with traditional language ("Be Thou My Vision," "How Great Thou Art") have retained their original wording, showing that retaining traditional phrasing is both possible and appropriate.
- 3.3 Flamborough (Redemption) requests that Synod 2025 overturn the decision of GS 2022 and restore the classic traditional wording of the three hymns in question.

#### 4. Considerations

##### 4.1 *Concerning Liturgical Stability and Common Memory:*

- 4.1.1 Retaining traditional, widely recognized wording helps maintain unity of worship across generations and churches.
- 4.1.2 Familiarity with the classic wording aids congregational singing and allows believers to join more easily with the broader Christian community when singing these hymns.

##### 4.2 *Concerning the Standing Committee's Guidelines:*

- 4.2.1 The Standing Committee itself advised that archaisms should be retained if they do not significantly hinder understanding and if they preserve a hymn's classic nature.
- 4.2.2 The minor use of "Thou" in these hymns does not create misunderstanding and contributes to their dignified, historic character.

##### 4.3 *Concerning Precedent and Consistency:*

- 4.3.1 Other beloved hymns such as "Be Thou My Vision" have preserved their traditional wording.
- 4.3.2 Inconsistency in handling different hymns undermines the credibility of the editing process.

##### 4.4 *Concerning the Desirability of Change:*

- 4.4.1 Changing familiar texts introduces unnecessary disruption to congregational worship.
- 4.4.2 There must be compelling reasons to alter historic texts, and no sufficient cause has been demonstrated in this case.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To sustain the appeal of the Flamborough (Redemption) CanRC regarding GS 2022 art. 111;
- 5.2 To restore the traditional wording of:
  - 5.2.1 "Come, Thou Almighty King"
  - 5.2.2 "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"
  - 5.2.3 "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"

## **ADOPTED**

J. Torenvliet and R. Bremmer abstained as per CO art. 32.

### **Article 121 – Overtures RSE 2024: CO art. 49, 44, 47 (*Delegation to General Synod*)**

#### **1. Material**

- 1.1 Overture of RSE 2024 regarding Article 49, 44, 47 CO (CCO) (8.4.2.4).
- 1.2 Overture of RSE 2024 regarding Article 49, 44, 47 CO (CNO) (8.4.2.5).
- 1.3 Letters from the following churches: Ancaster (8.5.4.1), Brampton (Grace) (8.5.4.2), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) (8.5.4.3), Caledonia (8.5.4.4), Calgary (8.5.4.5, 8.5.4.6), Carman East (8.5.4.7, 8.5.4.8), Chilliwack (8.5.4.9), Cloverdale (8.5.4.10, 8.5.4.11), Coaldale (8.5.4.12, 8.5.4.13), Edmonton (Immanuel) (8.5.4.14, 8.5.4.15), Edmonton (Providence) (8.5.4.16), Fergus (Maranatha) (8.5.4.17), Fergus North (8.5.4.18), Grand Rapids (8.5.4.19), Lincoln (Vineyard) (8.5.4.20), Neerlandia (8.5.4.21), Niagara South (8.5.4.22), Orangeville (8.5.4.23, 8.5.4.24), Ottawa (Jubilee) (8.5.4.25), Sardis (8.5.4.26), St. Albert (8.5.4.27, 8.5.4.28), Willoughby Heights (8.5.4.29), and Winnipeg (Redeemer) (8.5.4.30).

#### **2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The overtures were declared admissible.  
Grounds: They were submitted by regional synod and were received on time.
- 2.2 The letters from the churches were declared admissible.  
Grounds: They interact with overtures submitted to GS 2025 and were received on time.

#### **3. Observations**

##### **3.1 *The Overtures***

- 3.1.1 Two overtures, one from Classis Central Ontario (via Flamborough (Redemption)) and one from Classis Northern Ontario (via Brampton (Grace)), propose revisions to CO art. 49 to broaden representation at general synod.
- 3.1.2 Both overtures request that the current regional synod-based delegation (6 ministers and 6 elders from each region) be replaced with classis-based delegation: each of the eight classes would delegate two ministers and two elders, increasing the total from 24 to 32 delegates.
- 3.1.3 The overtures cite the growth of the federation (16 net new churches since 2004), geographic dispersion, lack of familiarity among delegates, and concerns over equitable classis-based representation.

##### **3.2 *Supporting Grounds of the Overtures***

- 3.2.1 The current system may result in entire classes being overlooked and the new system would ensure “that each classical region is represented at general synod” (p. 4) which in turn would lead to “representing the concerns of a classis region at general synod” (p. 5).
- 3.2.2 Delegates are often unfamiliar with candidates, potentially compromising voting quality.

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- 3.2.3 Classis-based selection would reduce overlap between regional synod and general synod delegates, especially in appeals.
- 3.2.4 Broader local input would foster a greater sense of ownership of general synod decisions and ecclesiastical unity.
- 3.2.5 Other federations (URCNA, OPC) already use proportionally broader or classis-based systems.

### 3.3 *Churches Supporting the Overtures*

(Brampton (Grace), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth), Caledonia, Chilliwack, Edmonton (Providence), Fergus North, Lincoln (Vineyard), Ottawa (Jubilee), Sardis, Willoughby Heights)

- 3.3.1 Key themes include improved engagement, stronger representation of all regions, greater sense of commitment to synod decisions, and the principle that involvement breeds ownership.

### 3.4 *Churches Opposing the Overtures*

(Ancaster, Calgary, Carman East, Cloverdale, Coaldale, Edmonton (Immanuel), Fergus (Maranatha), Grand Rapids, Neerlandia, Niagara South, Orangeville, St. Albert, and Winnipeg (Redeemer)).

- 3.4.1 Objections include: perceived shift to proportional representation, risk of regionalism, lack of compelling benefit, potential logistical and financial burdens, strain on small classes with limited personnel, departure from deliberative assembly ethos, and lack of evidence that the current system is broken.
- 3.4.2 Others point out logistical burdens (e.g., travel, costs, facilities) or note that any issues with familiarity could be resolved via improved communication (e.g., bios of nominees).

### 3.5 *Churches Offering Qualified Support or Nuanced Views*

- 3.5.1 The Willoughby Heights CanRC and the St. Albert CanRC affirm the need for broader representation but are hesitant about abandoning regional synod as the delegating body.
- 3.5.2 Willoughby Heights rejects a six-month delegation requirement; the Winnipeg (Redeemer) CanRC echoes concerns about small classis limitations.

## 4. Considerations

### 4.1 *The overtures do not demonstrate that the current system is in need of improvement.*

No examples are given of classes being overlooked in choosing delegates to general synod. No compelling evidence is provided that the present system of regional delegation has failed to serve the churches well in either principle or practice.

### 4.2 *The overtures shift the nature of delegation toward proportional representation.*

Historic Continental Reformed polity works with the principle of delegation—not of direct representation. Those delegated are appointed to represent *all* the churches. Each general synod is convened not to replicate much less to promote regional interests but to exercise delegated judgment on behalf of the federation as a whole. The shift to classis-based delegation moves toward a model where every classical region has its own “voice” at general synod. This approach subtly imports a narrow representative

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expectation foreign to the historic Continental Reformed understanding of delegated, deliberative assemblies.

4.3 *Numerical growth of churches does not materially affect the concept of delegation.*

4.4 *The concern about delegates voting for unfamiliar candidates is exaggerated.*

Ecclesiastical delegation has never assumed necessary personal acquaintance with every delegate. Nonetheless, bios, ecclesiastical records, and recommendations are possible means for more informed voting. Minor assemblies are free to establish their own procedures for these matters.

4.5 *The overtures minimize the practical burdens their proposal would impose.*

A small classis forced to rely repeatedly on a handful of ministers and elders is a realistic concern.

4.6 *Expanding the number of delegates may weaken—not strengthen—the deliberative character of Synod.*

Increasing numbers do not automatically improve deliberation. Larger bodies often become less nimble, more procedural, and leave less time for contributions by each delegate.

4.7 *Every church already has the greatest reason to take ownership of general synod decisions.*

By means of the Church Order, every church has entered into a covenant with all the other churches in the federation, pledging also to consider as “settled and binding” all decisions of the broader assemblies (under the condition of Art 31 CO). Keeping one’s promises is a sacred duty commanded by the Lord (3<sup>rd</sup> Comm; see LD 37).

4.8 *The overtures draw inexact analogies with the URCNA and OPC.*

These federations operate under different ecclesiastical assumptions, particularly concerning the representative nature of assemblies. Their practices are coherent within their systems but can’t be readily transplanted into the CanRC structures of governance.

## 5. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

5.1 Not to adopt the overtures.

**ADOPTED** with one abstention.

## Article 122 – URCNA (United Reformed Churches in North America)

### 1. Material

1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 12: United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) (8.2.10.12).

1.2 Letter from Tintern Spring Creek (8.3.10.23).

### 2. Admissibility

2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

2.2 The letter from the church was declared admissible.

Grounds: It interacts with an overture submitted to GS 2025 and was received on time.

### 3. Observations

3.1 GS 2022 (art. 167) decided:

- [3.1] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.1.1] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) according to the adopted rules;
  - [3.1.2] To encourage the churches to continue to foster relationships with local URCNA churches; these activities could include, but are not limited to, pulpit exchanges, joint community and mission projects, and study opportunities;
  - [3.1.3] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 "...moving towards greater unity requires further grassroots movement building contact and trust." Various challenges to building contact and trust exist within the CanRC and URCNA.
- 3.2.2 "Since there is a substantial amount of interaction among our respective classes and local churches, the CER has begun to reach out to the CanRC classes to get a better idea of all that is presently happening between local CanRC and URCNA churches. Some classes have appointed committees to liaise with CER."
- 3.2.3 "URCNA Synod Escondido 2024 entertained a recommendation from [Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU)] to set aside funds to remove financial hinderances for the pulpit exchanges between distant URC and CanRC. For various reasons the recommendation was not adopted."
- 3.2.4 "Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or practices. The important determination is to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture and confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice."

3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To encourage the churches to continue to foster relationships with local URCNA churches. These activities could include, but are not limited to, pulpit exchanges, joint community and mission projects, and study opportunities;
  - 3.3.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the URCNA to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

3.4 The Tintern Spring Creek CanRC raises concerns about specific comments in the CERCU report to Synod Escondido 2024, and requests the CER to clarify their position on these comments.

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#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) continues to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC and URCNA is mutually beneficial.
- 4.2 Given the continued desire on our part for the highest expression of unity with the URCNA and given the proximity of most CanRC churches to many URCNA churches, it is appropriate to encourage maximum interaction. The CER is well-positioned to repeatedly facilitate this encouragement.
- 4.3 The concern, observed by Tintern Spring Creek, about an “identity crisis” in the CanRC reflects tensions acknowledged by the CER regarding internal changes; while the wording may have been unhelpful, it was meant to candidly express those challenges within a close relationship. Importantly, this does not present an impediment to continued growth in unity with the URCNA.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) according to the adopted rules.
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To encourage the churches to continue to foster relationships with local United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) churches. These activities could include, but are not limited to, pulpit exchanges, joint community and mission projects, and study opportunities.
  - 5.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the URCNA to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

#### ADOPTED

#### Article 123 – Point of Order: CER financial report

Advisory Committee 2 moved that the CER expense report be included as an appendix to the General Fund report.

#### ADOPTED

#### Article 124 – NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council)

##### 1. Material

- 1.1 CER Report 24: North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) (8.2.10.1.24).

##### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

### 3. Observations

3.1 GS 2022 (art. 159) decided the following:

- [3.1] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.1.1] To represent the CanRC at the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) and to continue active involvement in it;
  - [3.1.2] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod;
  - [3.1.3] To consider including relevant information about ecumenical conferences in the report to general synod.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

3.2.1 The CER participated in meetings in 2022 & 2023

3.2.1.1 During these meetings CER held bilateral meetings with delegates from the following churches: RCUS, URCNA, ERQ, HRC, FRCNA, OPC, RPCNA, and ARP.

3.2.2 The CER continues to see the benefit of being involved in NAPARC.

3.2.3 NAPARC meetings provide opportunities for CER to fulfill other parts of its mandate.

3.2.4 The CER is willing to assist the local churches in regard to NAPARC issues.

3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

3.3.1 To continue membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC);

3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

3.3.2.1 To continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC and to continue its active involvement in it.

3.3.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to NAPARC to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next General Synod.

### 4. Considerations

4.1 With thankfulness to the Lord, the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) continues to be a useful forum to promote harmony and unity among Reformed and Presbyterian churches within Canada and the USA.

### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

5.1 To continue membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC);

5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

5.2.1 To continue to represent the CanRC at the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) and to continue its active involvement in it.

5.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to NAPARC to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

## **Article 125 – ICRC (International Conference of Reformed Churches)**

### **1. Material**

1.1 CER Report 25: International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) (8.2.10.1.25).

### **2. Admissibility**

2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

### **3. Observations**

3.1 GS 2022 (Art. 145) decided:

- [3.1] To continue the membership of the CanRC in the ICRC;
- [3.2] Regarding membership of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) in the ICRC:

[3.2.1] To propose to the tenth ICRC to be held, the Lord willing, in Windhoek, Namibia during October 2022, that the membership of the GKv be terminated, as its decision on women in office no longer qualifies it for membership in the ICRC;

[3.2.2] To express agreement with a similar proposal decided by the 87<sup>th</sup> (2021) General Assembly (GA) of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC);

[3.2.3] To convey this proposal by means of a letter from General Synod 2022 via the second clerk to the ICRC as soon as possible;

[3.3] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

[3.3.1] To ensure appropriate CanRC participation in ICRC activities;

[3.3.2] To attend the next ICRC with a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

3.2.1 The ICRC continues to serve the 5 purposes listed in its constitution well. Those purposes are:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the Member Churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the Member Churches;
3. to facilitate and promote cooperation among the Member Churches in such areas as missions, theological education, and ministries of mercy;
4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the Member Churches;
5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

3.2.2 In line with the decision of GS 2022, the CanRC moved that the membership of the Reformed Churches (liberated) (GKv) be terminated. This motion carried without opposition.

3.2.3 “The CanRC have always played a big role in the ICRC and are positioned to continue to do so in the future.”

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3.2.4 “The ICRC has also been instrumental in helping build close personal ties with those in other churches serving on interchurch committees and coordinating activities among member churches.”

3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC);
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To ensure appropriate CanRC participation in ICRC activities;
  - 3.3.2.2 To attend the next ICRC with a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members.
  - 3.3.2.3 To meet bi-laterally with as many delegations as possible from churches with whom the CanRC have ecumenical relations, prioritizing those who are not members of NAPARC;
  - 3.3.2.4 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the ICRC to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### **4. Considerations**

- 4.1 With thankfulness to the Lord, the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) continues to be a useful forum to promote harmony and unity among Reformed and Presbyterian churches worldwide.
- 4.2 “Having four members of the CRCA attend the ICRC was beneficial in the past and this practice should be maintained.” (GS 2013 art. 167 cons. 3.2)
- 4.3 It may not be possible, timewise, to meet with all churches with whom we have ecumenical relations. Since bi-laterals occur at every NAPARC, which takes place annually, prioritizing bi-laterals with non-NAPARC members at the ICRC, which takes place once every four years, is a stewardly use of opportunity.

#### **5. Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC);
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To ensure appropriate CanRC participation in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) activities;
  - 5.2.2 To attend the next ICRC with a delegation of two voting members and up to two advisory members.
  - 5.2.3 To meet bi-laterally with as many delegations as possible from churches with whom the CanRC have ecumenical relations, prioritizing those who are not members of NAPARC;
  - 5.2.4 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the ICRC to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

## Article 126 – FRCSA (Free Reformed Churches in South Africa)

### 1. Material

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 23: Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) (8.2.10.23).

### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 147) decided:

- [3.1] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) under the adopted rules;
- [3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.2.1] To send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;
  - [3.2.2] To continue involvement in discussions regarding financial requests from the FRCSA and provide coordination assistance where possible;
  - [3.2.3] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next synod.

- 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 While the FRCSA is a relatively small federation, they have a disproportionately large number of theological students.
- 3.2.2 The FRCSA has officially ended their relationship with the GKv and has extended ecclesiastical fellowship to the newly formed GK.
- 3.2.3 There are various formal arrangements between our churches and their federation. This includes most notably the training of their theological students at CRTS and arranged support through the Foreign Student Bursary Fund (FSBF), the work of Rev. Ryan Kampen (Dunnville East) at the Reformational Study Centre, and the support of the Timothy Project by Lincoln (Vineyard) Canadian Reformed Church.
- 3.2.4 There remains a need for financial support. Between theological education, local mission, needy churches, and needy students, the financial situation is tenuous.

- 3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To continue involvement in discussions involving financial requests from the FRCSA and provide coordination assistance where possible;
  - 3.3.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FRCSA to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) continues to display the marks of true and faithful churches of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC and FRCSA is mutually beneficial.
- 4.2 Reduced funding from The Netherlands for missions, coupled with many opportunities for missions and the increasing financial needs of theological education warrants financial support where feasible.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To continue involvement in discussions involving financial requests from the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) and provide coordination assistance where possible;
  - 5.2.2 To send a delegation to meetings of the FRCSA Synod at least once every three years.
  - 5.2.3 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FRCSA to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

#### ADOPTED

### Article 127 – RPCNA (Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America)

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 10: Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) (8.2.10.10).
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Fergus (Maranatha) (8.3.10.22), Grand Rapids (8.3.10.10).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

- 2.2 The letters from the churches were declared admissible.

Grounds: They interact with a report to GS 2025 and were received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 166) decided:

- [3.1] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

- [3.1.1] To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA), particularly at meetings of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), and when

appropriate, to discuss the matters that hinder Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);

- [3.1.2] To take up dialogue and contact with the new Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC) once it is formed;
- [3.1.3] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

[4.1] Re 3.1.1:

- [4.1.1] While GS 2016 (Art. 90) acknowledged that the RPCNA can be recognized for their faithfulness to the Word of God and their strong Reformed convictions, it also noted that their practice and exegetical defense of ordaining female deacons, as well as GS 2016's reservations about the place and function of *The Testimony*, hinders the establishment of EF.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 Continued contact with the RPCNA, including attendance at its Synod.
- 3.2.2 Appreciation for the RPCNA's confessional integrity and commitment to Reformed doctrine.
- 3.2.3 Notable distinctives in worship and practice, including exclusive psalmody and head coverings, which are not considered obstacles to fellowship.
- 3.2.4 "At NAPARC 2023, the CER sought clarity about what category of EF the RPCNA had offered the CanRC. The CER learned it was not our understanding of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (as reported to GS 2016 by the CCCNA) but of contact, with elements from both our Ecclesiastical Fellowship Category B and our proposed Ecclesiastical Contact."
- 3.2.5 "In its report to GS 2022, the CCCNA published the observation that the RPCNA has historically allowed for women deacons, but their trend has been to distance themselves from this practice."

3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the RPCNA, particularly at NAPARC;
  - 3.3.2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the RPCNA to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.
- 3.4 The Fergus (Maranatha) CanRC asks that the CER be mandated to engage in continued dialogue with the RPCNA on the issues of women deacons and the place and function of *The Testimony*, and to seek resolution on both.
- 3.5 The Grand Rapids CanRC raises concerns about *The Testimony* and whether it is consonant with the Three Forms of Unity.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) is a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ.

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- 4.2 The RPCNA is receptive to dialogue and discussion with the CanRC and have requested that the CanRC reopen consideration about entering into fraternal relations. Both Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) and Ecclesiastical Contact contain elements of what the RPCNA requested. Ecclesiastical Contact is consistent with the decision taken by GS 2016 (art. 90).
- 4.3 The RPCNA is a member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) and the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).
- 4.4 *The Testimony* was identified by GS 2022 as a hindrance to the establishing EF.
  - 4.4.1 The CER has not addressed whether it remains a hindrance to EF.
- 4.5 The ordination of women deacons was identified by GS 2022 as a hindrance to establishing EF.
  - 4.4.1 The CER has not addressed whether it remains a hindrance to EF.
  - 4.4.2 For GS 2016, the CCCNA (now the CER) investigated in detail the matter of women's deacons within the RPCNA and concluded the RPCNA does not consider deacons to have ruling authority within the church. This view is the same as the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) with whom it was not an impediment to entering EF (cf. GS 2016 art. 59 cons. 3.4). Within the RPCNA, the office of deacon is necessarily different in nature and essence from the office of deacon within the CanRC, contra GS 2016 art. 90 cons. 3.2.3.
  - 4.4.2.1 The CER report notes that "In its report to GS 2022, the CCCNA published the observation that the RPCNA has historically allowed for women deacons, but their trend has been to distance themselves from this practice". The fraternal observer from the RPCNA confirmed this and noted that it will be discussed at their next synod.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA), particularly at the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC);
  - 5.2.2 To work towards entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B with the RPCNA by resolving outstanding issues identified by GS 2022 and by creating more awareness within the CanRC about the RPCNA practices (e.g. the nature and ordination of deacons within the RPCNA);
  - 5.2.3 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the RPCNA to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

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### Article 128 – Closing Devotions

Rev. Carl Van Dam read Ephesians 3 and led in prayer. The day was closed with the singing of Psalm 108:1,2.

*Synod was adjourned until 9:00am.*

### Day 8 — Morning Session Wednesday, May 14, 2025

### Article 129 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman read Psalm 133, spoke some devotional words, led in opening prayer, and had the meeting sing Psalm 133. He observed that all synod members were present.

### Article 130 – Acts

The prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

### Article 131 – Recording a unanimous vote

Given a request from the floor of Synod, it was determined that the *Acts of GS 2025* will only record that a recommendation was adopted unanimously where it regards entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK), to parallel a decision taken by GS 2019 (art. 41) regarding ending EF with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv).

### Article 132 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 60 & 81

Synod went into closed session.

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal from Willoughby Heights (8.6.8.1).
- 1.2 Letter from Lincoln (Vineyard) (8.6.8.5).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 Synod declared the appeal from Willoughby Heights admissible.

##### Grounds:

- 2.1.1 Willoughby Heights complains that it has been wronged by a decision of GS 2022 which they assert has compromised the welfare of the churches.
- 2.1.2 A church has a right to appeal a decision of an ecclesiastical assembly and is not limited to cases of personal injury but may also properly include the welfare of the churches (CO art. 31).

- 2.2 Synod declared the letter from Lincoln (Vineyard) admissible.

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**Grounds:** Lincoln (Vineyard) urges GS 2025 not to entertain the appeal from Willoughby Heights, citing previous deliberations and the passage of time in which their congregation has found peace and former members have moved on. They suggest that re-opening this matter will not serve the cause of justice or peace and suggest that “a more beneficial approach would be for Synod to consider an overture aimed at reforming the appeals process.”

### 3. Observations

- 3.1 Willoughby Heights appeals the decisions of GS 2022 (Confidential Acts, Articles 60 & 81) alleging that GS 2022 failed to judge the substance of appeals of GS 2019 submitted by Lincoln (Vineyard) and Dunnville.
- 3.2 Willoughby Heights maintains that GS 2022, by refusing to address the content of Articles 98 and 141 of GS 2019, compounded injustice and left the appellants “in the dark” concerning future procedural steps.
- 3.3 Willoughby Heights is concerned that in this matter the Canadian Reformed Churches are failing in exercising mercy, justice, and faithfulness.
- 3.4 Willoughby Heights alleges that the failure to examine all sides at the various assemblies led to decisions which were considered procedurally improper by GS 2022 (cf. Proverbs 18:17).
- 3.5 The appeal of Willoughby Heights is focused on the procedural pathway, not the original discipline cases, and it builds its case on perceived irregularities in the handling of appeals from 2017 to 2022.
- 3.6 Lincoln (Vineyard) in a letter to GS 2025 acknowledges the procedural breakdowns but urges GS 2025 not to reopen the matter, advocating instead for reform.
- 3.7 The appeal of Willoughby Heights does not include the full original appeals to GS 2022. Willoughby Heights could not do so as the original appeals were not fully archived (see GS 2022 art. 154).
- 3.8 GS 2022 sustained the jurisdictional concerns raised by Lincoln (Vineyard) and Dunnville, but declined to judge the remaining grounds, citing the compounded irregularities.
- 3.9 GS 2022 explicitly stated that a judgement on the merits was not possible due to the procedural confusion and incomplete record.
- 3.10 Willoughby Heights offers no clear path forward except to demand that GS 2025 issue a substantive ruling, even though key documents and parties are absent.
- 3.11 Currently, there are no regulations or guidelines to guide the appeals process at general synods.

### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The appeal of Willoughby Heights raises valid concerns about procedural errors. Done in human weakness, these errors have, at times, created confusion and hindered the pursuit of justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Such failures give rise to sorrow and humble reflection.
- 4.2 The appeal of Willoughby Heights underestimates the difficulty GS 2022 faced in trying to resolve such a tangled matter.

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- 4.3 GS 2022 acted within its rights under the Church Order to refrain from issuing a judgment in a situation where jurisdiction, evidence, and appeal pathways were unclear.
- 4.4 The absence of key materials and the withdrawal or silence of primary parties means GS 2025 would face similar if not worse constraints than GS 2022.
- 4.5 Reopening the case at this stage risks further instability, confusion, and harm to those who have since moved on.
- 4.6 While highlighting problems, the appeal does not offer a constructive solution other than critiquing GS 2022.
- 4.7 The best response at this stage is not to re-judge but to reform: to acknowledge systemic weaknesses and take steps to prevent such failures in future appeal processes.
- 4.8 The record shows multiple procedural failures at various levels, but GS 2022 exercised caution, not indifference to the pursuit of mercy, justice, and faithfulness.
- 4.9 GS 2025 should focus instead on learning from the procedural breakdowns and improving its process moving forward.

## 5. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To deny the appeal of the Willoughby Heights CanRC re GS 2022 (art. 60 & 81);
- 5.2 To appoint a three-member ad hoc committee (including one alternate) with the following mandate:
  - 5.2.1 To analyze the procedural failures surrounding previous appeals to general synod, using the events highlighted by the appeal of the Willoughby Heights CanRC as a case study;
  - 5.2.2 To study existing appeal protocols used both within the Canadian Reformed Federation and other federations with whom we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF), as well as further resources the committee deems relevant;
  - 5.2.3 To propose establishing a General Synod Appeals Committee, including regulations for consistent standards of admissibility, rules for evidence, jurisdiction, and record handling in the future processing of appeals to general synod;
  - 5.2.4 To include in its proposal guidelines on how confidential acts should be distributed to consistories and how consistories should deal with these;
  - 5.2.5 To submit its report to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.
  - 5.2.6 This committee shall be known as the Committee to Propose Guidelines for Appeals at General Synods (CPGA).

## ADOPTED

K. Janssen abstained as per CO art. 32.

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**Article 133 – CONFIDENTIAL – Personal Appeal 8.6.8.5**

Synod continued in closed session.

*Article not published as per GS 2025 art. 189.*

Synod returned to open session.

**Article 134 – RPCC (Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada)****1. Material**

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 11: Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC) (8.2.10.11).
- 1.2 Letter from Guelph (Emmanuel) (8.3.10.11).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Ground: It was mandated by the previous synod and received on time.

- 2.2 The letter was declared admissible.

Ground: It interacts with a report to GS 2025 and was received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 166) decided:

- [3.1] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.1.2] To take up dialogue and contact with the new Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC) once it is formed;
  - [3.1.3] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.
- [3.2] To not be a sponsoring church for the RPCC if it applies for membership in NAPARC.

- 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 There has only been limited success to formal and informal efforts to become acquainted.
- 3.2.2 Since the RPCC formed, their initial administrative loads have hindered their ecumenical contact.
- 3.2.3 The grassroots fellowship formerly enjoyed with the RPCNA now continues with the RPCC.
- 3.2.4 The RPCC has no plans to make use of *The Testimony*, nor to allow for women deacons.

- 3.3 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.1.1 To pursue discussion and further exploration with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC);

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- 3.3.1.2 To investigate thoroughly in order to make an appropriate recommendation regarding ecumenical relations with the RPCC;
- 3.3.1.3 To submit its report on its findings with respect to the RPCC to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.
- 3.4 Guelph (Emmanuel) requests that the same relationship status as with the RPCNA be adopted.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 Considering our previous history with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), and the decisions of GS 2022 to mandate the CER “To take up dialogue and contact with the new Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC) once it is formed” (GS 2022 art. 166 dec. 3.1.2) continuing discussion and exploration with the RPCC with a view to making a recommendation makes sense. This is in line with the thinking of Guelph (Emmanuel).

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.1.1 To pursue Ecclesiastical Contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC);
  - 5.1.2 Make an appropriate recommendation regarding ecumenical relations with the RPCC;
  - 5.1.3 To submit its report on its findings with respect to the RPCC to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

#### ADOPTED

### Article 135 – ARPC (Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church)

Committee 2 presented a majority report (draft 1) and a minority report (draft 1) re CER Report 3: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC). The Chairman read the Guidelines for General Synods regarding procedures when there is a majority and minority report from an advisory committee. The reports were discussed. The fraternal observer of the ARPC participated in the discussion. The majority report was voted on first (as per Guidelines for General Synods III.A.5).

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 3: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) (8.2.10.3).
- 1.2 Letters from the churches: Barrhead (8.3.10.2), Guelph (Emmanuel) (8.3.10.11), Fergus North (8.3.10.19), Grassie (Covenant) (8.3.10.20), Hamilton (Providence) (8.3.10.21).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

2.2 The letters from the churches were declared admissible.

Grounds: They interact with a report to GS 2025 and were received on time.

### **3. Observations**

3.1 GS 2022 (art. 168) mandated the CER:

[3.1] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

[3.1.1] To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the ARPC;

[3.1.2] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

3.2 From the CER report, the following:

3.2.1 The relationship with the ARPC continues to develop organizationally as well as organically.

3.2.2 The ARPC has become known as a denomination that is sincerely committed to being confessionally Reformed.

3.2.3 While the ARPC has taken a strong position against the ordination of women to the office of pastor and elder, a provision has been made in their Form of Government which allows local sessions to install women as deacons . . . with the understanding that their work was to be carried out under the supervision and authority of the session. At this time, at a rough estimate, less than 10% of sessions within the ARPC have elected to make use of this provision. Furthermore, the number of sessions making use of this provision appears to be declining.

3.2.4 The existence of a local option which allows for women to serve as deacons has not proven to be a barrier to entering into EF with the Reformed Church in Quebec (ERQ).

3.3 The CER recommends:

3.3.1 To receive with thankfulness the offer of Fraternal Fellowship extended to the CanRC by the General Synod of the ARPC (2023).

3.3.2 To enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) according to the adopted rules and to communicate that decision to the next meeting of the General Synod of the ARPC (2025).

3.3.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

3.3.3.1 To convey this decision to the ARPC as soon as possible;

3.3.3.2 To establish contact with the Canadian denomination of the ARPC when it comes into existence in 2025;

3.3.3.3 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the ARPC to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

3.4 The Barrhead CanRC objects to granting EF Category B to ARPC on the grounds that we rejected EF with the RPCNA in GS 2016 on account of women deacons.

3.5 Guelph (Emmanuel) cautions against having personal and anecdotal experiences weigh on the federation's ecumenical relationships, whether positively or negatively.

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- 3.6 Fergus North deems it imprudent to enter into EF while the ARPC retains provisions for allowing women deacons.
- 3.7 Grassie (Covenant) suggests remaining in Ecclesiastical Contact to see how things progress with the ARP Canadian Presbytery. Waiting would also allow more clarity on the findings of their Synod on the work and scope of the diaconal office.
- 3.8 Hamilton (Providence) observes among other things:
  - 3.8.1 The ARPC has given abundant evidence of its commitment to remaining faithful to the Word of God and to the Reformed confessions;
  - 3.8.2 Within southwestern Ontario there are a number of CanRC congregations that are enjoying regular and increasing contact with the ARPC congregations. This occurs both organically between members of our congregations and organizationally with our respective assemblies. These experiences are evidence of a real and growing mutual affection between our respective denominations.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The CER has fulfilled its mandate.
- 4.2 The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) has given ample evidence of sincere and continued faithfulness to both God's Word and the Reformed confessions. This is evidenced by:
  - 4.2.1 The faithful manner in which the fathers and brothers of ARPC have conducted themselves within the higher courts of the church;
  - 4.2.2 The sincerity of their Reformed conviction can also be seen in the doctrinal/positional statements which have been adopted by their General Synod;
  - 4.2.3 The way that the ARPC has steadily divested itself of ecclesiastical relationships with denominations that have progressed down theologically 'liberal' pathways;
  - 4.2.4 The ARPC has intentionally endeavoured to strengthen and establish ecclesiastical relationships with denominations/federations of strong historic Reformed conviction, including the OPC, the CanRC and the URCNA.
- 4.3 There has been meaningful contact between our respective churches at both the grassroots and the federative levels. That contact warrants formalizing our relationship in this way.
- 4.4 A relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B is intended to function in circumstances where there is good reason for recognizing another federation/denomination as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ, while simultaneously acknowledging that culture, distance, and history may limit the intensity with which that relationship can be exercised. Such is the case here. The bulk of the ARPC is located in the Southern US and the relative distance between our people will necessarily limit the degree of our regular interaction. Nevertheless, it would be a blessing to be able to demonstrate our unity in Christ when such occasions arise. As such, EF Category B would be the best 'fit' for our relationship with the ARPC.
- 4.5 Establishing EF has immediate consequences (e.g. table and pulpit fellowship); the ARPC should be made aware of its existence as soon as possible.

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- 4.6 At the current time, the area of greatest contact between the CanRC and the ARPC is in Southwest Ontario. When the new Canadian denomination comes into existence, it would be a blessing to be able to continue that relationship. We may also be able to be of encouragement to our Canadian brothers and sisters as they undertake the hard work of instituting as a new Synod.
- 4.7 The issue of women deacons raised by the Barrhead CanRC and the Fergus North CanRC is adequately answered in the CER report.
  - 4.7.1 In *Women In The Life of the Church* (Section VI – What May Women Do?), the ARP assert, “Scripture does not permit women to serve in the office of elder, and that the role of spiritually authoritative teaching and discipline in the church is reserved for male leadership.” As such the situation in the ARPC is unlike the situation with the GKv who employ a non-biblical hermeneutic.
  - 4.7.2 Sessions are permitted to ordain women deacons but are not required to do so. Relatively few sessions make use of this freedom.
  - 4.7.3 The ARPC states that deacons do not hold an authoritative or governing position. This view is the same as the ERQ with whom it was not an impediment to entering EF (cf. GS 2016 Art 59 Consideration 3.4). Within the ARPC, the office of deacon is necessarily different in nature and essence from the office of deacon within the CanRC, contra GS 2016 Article 90 Consideration 3.2.3.
- 4.8 The Grassie (Covenant) CanRC does not adequately show what new information might come out that would substantially impact a decision to extend EF to the ARPC by waiting until a future synod.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To receive with thankfulness the offer of Fraternal Fellowship extended to the CanRC by the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) (2023);
- 5.2 To enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category B with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) according to the adopted rules and to communicate that decision to the next meeting of the General Synod of the ARPC (2025);
- 5.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.3.1 To convey this decision to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) as soon as possible;
  - 5.3.2 To establish contact with the Canadian denomination of the ARPC when it comes into existence in 2025;
  - 5.3.3 To create more awareness within the CanRC about the ARPC practices (e.g. the nature of deacons within the ARPC);
  - 5.3.4 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the ARPC to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

## ADOPTED

Rev. Rob Schouten read Ephesians 2:18-22 and led in thanksgiving prayer for this development.

## Article 136 – GGRI (Reformed Churches in Indonesia)

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on the GGRI (Reformed Churches in Indonesia). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

## Article 137 – GGRCI (Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia)

### 1. Material

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 16: The Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI) (8.2.10.16).

### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 126) decided:

- [3.1] To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI);
- [3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.2.1] To try to send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next national synod of the GGRCI;
  - [3.2.2] To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRCI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;
  - [3.2.3] To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in Timor;
  - [3.2.4] As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
  - [3.2.5] To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

- 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 The “GGRCI Synod took place in an orderly way in good brotherly harmony.”
- 3.2.2 New government regulations are pushing the GGRCI and the GGRI toward closer cooperation.
- 3.2.3 The GGRCI is experiencing challenges around theological training.
- 3.2.4 The GGRCI terminated the relationship with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv).
- 3.2.5 “There are numerous reasons for the CanRC to continue to maintain a meaningful relationship with the GGRCI. The Toronto-Bethel CanRC and the Smithville CanRC have (had) mission fields in Indonesia. Across Canada, many CanRC

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members are involved with work among impoverished children and families in Timor and Sumba; the organizations Word & Deed and Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund (CRWRF) have played key roles in this.”

- 3.2.6 “The recent visit of members of the CER to GS-GGRCI 2022 demonstrates the importance of continuing EF and of being available for offering input, encouragement, and support where needed.”
- 3.2.7 “By working together with the FRCA and URCNA, [the] CanRC will be able to support the GGRCI and foster unity among Reformed churches in Indonesia. Given the mission work of Smithville in Indonesia, which impacts both the GGRI and the GGRCI, it is important for the CER to share information concerning its findings with Smithville.”

3.3 The CER recommends that Synod decide:

- 3.3.1. To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI);
- 3.3.2. To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next synod of the GGRCI;
  - 3.3.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRCI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;
  - 3.3.2.3 As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions to promote ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
  - 3.3.2.4 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC;
  - 3.3.2.5 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the GGRCI to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI) continue to display the marks of true and faithful churches of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC and the GGRCI is mutually beneficial.
- 4.2 Sending delegates to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at their major assemblies is essential for maintaining a well-functioning ecclesiastical relationship in this cultural context.
- 4.3 Given that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) are closer to Indonesia than the CanRC, it is prudent that the CER share information with these churches and work in close conjunction with them, as well as with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA).
- 4.4 By working together with the FRCA and URCNA, the CanRC will be able to support the GGRCI and foster unity among Reformed churches in Indonesia.

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4.5 Given the mission work of the Smithville CanRC in Indonesia, which impacts both the GGRI and the GGRCI, it is important for the CER to share information concerning its findings with Smithville.

## **5. Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI);

5.2. To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

5.2.1 To send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next synod of the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI);

5.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRCI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;

5.2.3 As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions to promote ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;

5.2.4 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC;

5.2.5 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the GGRCI to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

## **ADOPTED**

### **Article 138 – GGRI-T (Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor)**

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on GGRI-T. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

### **Article 139 – Synod Guidelines re Officers of General Synods**

#### **1. Material**

1.1 Letter from Guelph (Emmanuel) (8.1.7).

#### **2. Admissibility**

2.1 The letter was declared admissible.

Ground: It pertains to the operations of a general synod and was received on time.

#### **3. Observations**

3.1 The Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC has submitted a letter expressing appreciation for the work of general synod and offering a recommendation regarding the election of officers.

3.2 Guelph (Emmanuel) affirms the value of having new voices at general synod and cautions against perceptions of entrenched leadership by repeatedly appointing the same brothers as officers.

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- 3.3 The letter does not question the character or objectivity of those who have served but emphasizes the importance of preserving broad trust and avoiding the appearance of synodical hierarchy.
- 3.4 Guelph (Emmanuel) proposes an amendment to Section I, Point H of the Guidelines for General Synod, encouraging Synod to “consider avoiding the reappointment of the same officers for more than two consecutive synods.”

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The submission of Guelph (Emmanuel) aligns with the long-standing Reformed concern to avoid hierarchical patterns in church governance.
- 4.2 While continuity of experience has value, the suggested amendment is worded as a consideration rather than a binding rule and therefore maintains the autonomy of each general synod to elect its officers freely.
- 4.3 Including such a guideline would encourage a healthy pattern of rotation, avoid the appearance of “synod rulers,” and foster wider participation without disrupting Synod’s orderly functioning.

#### 5. Recommendations

- 5.1 That Synod accede to the proposal of the Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC and amend Section I, Point H of the Guidelines for General Synods to read as follows:

“Officers of Synod shall be chosen by ballot in this order: chairman, vice-chairman, first clerk, and second clerk, with consideration made to avoid the reappointment of the same individuals to the same position for more than two (2) consecutive synods. Election to office is to be by majority of valid votes cast.”

#### ADOPTED

K. Janssen had his abstention recorded.

*Note: The Synod Guidelines as last revised by GS 2025 can be found in Appendix 25.*

*Synod was adjourned for committee work.*

#### Day 8 — Evening Session Wednesday, May 14, 2025

#### Article 140 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman had the meeting sing Hymn 7:1,3. He observed that all Synod members were present.

#### Article 141 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 105 (*Hymn Cap*)

Committee 1 presented draft 2 of a report on an appeal against GS 2022 art. 105 (*Hymn Cap*). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

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**Article 142 – SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section One, Parts 4, 5, and 7**

Committee 1 presented draft 1 of a report on the SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section One, Parts 4, 5, and 7. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 143 – Overture CCO Jun 2020: phrase “summarized in the *confessions*”**

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on an overture adopted by Classis Central Ontario (CCO) Jun 2020 and submitted by the Hamilton (Blessings) CanRC regarding the phrase “summarized in the *confessions*” in several Liturgical Forms. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 144 – Closing Devotions**

Rev. Ken Wieske spoke some devotional words, read Zechariah 4:6-10b, spoke some more devotional words, had the meeting sing Psalm 127:1,2, and led in prayer.

*Synod was adjourned until 9:00am.*

**Day 9 — Morning Session**  
**Thursday, May 15, 2025****Article 145 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman read Psalm 126, spoke some devotional words, led in opening prayer, and had the meeting sing Psalm 126. He observed that all Synod members were present.

**Article 146– Acts**

The prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

**Article 147 – KPCK – Letter of Greetings**

Rev. Karlo Janssen read a letter of greeting sent by the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK) which declared gratitude for our relationship. The full text of the letter can be found in Appendix 17. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

**Article 148 – IRB – Letter of Greetings**

Rev. Karlo Janssen read a letter of greeting sent by the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) which declared gratitude for our relationship and expressed regret at being unable to attend Synod in person. The full text of the letter can be found in Appendix 18. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

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**Article 149 – Overture RSE 2024: Shortening Duration of General Synod**

Committee 4 presented draft 1 of a report on an overture from RSE 2024 regarding shortening the duration of a general synod. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 150 – Appeal Burlington (Fellowship) against GS 2022 art. 155: Pulpit Access**

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a report on an appeal by the Burlington (Fellowship) CanRC against GS 2022 art. 155 regarding pulpit access. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 151 – GGRI (Reformed Churches in Indonesia)****1. Material**

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 15: Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI) (8.2.10.15).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was mandated by the previous synod and was received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 125) decided:

- [3.1] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI);
- [3.2] To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.2.1] To try to send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next national synod of the GGRI;
  - [3.2.2] To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and [the] United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;
  - [3.2.3] To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in Timor;
  - [3.2.4] As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
  - [3.2.5] To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

- 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 The CER continues to provide advice in dealing with practical matters, for example the difficulties when dealing with government and theological education.
- 3.2.2 The GGRI is looking at the possibility of establishing a relationship with the GGRI-T.

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- 3.2.3 The GGRI is investing time into ecumenical relations beyond the CanRC.
- 3.2.4 The churches within the GGRI inform each other about decisions made in their respective Regional Synods and help each other navigate various challenges and theological matters.
- 3.2.5 There are strong reasons to maintain our relationship with the GGRI. The CanRC has historical mission fields in Indonesia and continues to support churches in Papua. Across Canada, CanRC members are involved in aiding impoverished children and families in Timor and Sumba, with organizations like Word & Deed and CRWRF playing significant roles. As the Dutch Reformed Churches (former GKv, now NGK) withdraw from Indonesia, the GGRI look to the CanRC and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) for support, appreciating the input from CanRC's fraternal delegates.
- 3.2.6 The GGRI is increasingly concerned about the direction of the GKv (now NGK).
- 3.2.7 The GGRI show that they remain faithful churches.
  - 3.2.7.1 "By working together with the FRCA and [the] URCNA, the CanRC will be able to support the GGRI and foster unity among Reformed churches in Indonesia. Given the mission work of Smithville in Indonesia, which impacts both the GGRI and the GGRCI, it is important for the CER to share information concerning its findings with Smithville."

3.3 The CER recommends that Synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI);
- 3.3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next national synod of the GGRI;
  - 3.3.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;
  - 3.3.2.3 As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions to promote ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
  - 3.3.2.4 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC;
  - 3.3.2.5 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the GGRI to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI) continue to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC and GGRI is mutually beneficial.
- 4.2 Sending delegates to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at their major assemblies is essential for maintaining a well-functioning ecclesiastical relationship in this cultural context.

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- 4.3 Given that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) are very involved in Indonesia, it is prudent that the CER share information with these churches and work in close conjunction with them as well as with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA).
- 4.4 By working together with the FRCA and the URCNA, the CanRC will be able to support the GGRI and foster unity among Reformed churches in Indonesia.
- 4.5 Given the mission work of Smithville in Indonesia, which impacts both the GGRI and the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI), it is important for the CER to share information concerning its findings with the Smithville CanRC.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI);
- 5.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To send a delegation to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next national synod of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI);
  - 5.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;
  - 5.2.3 As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions to promote ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
  - 5.2.4 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC;
  - 5.2.5 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the GGRI to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

## ADOPTED

### Article 152 – GGRI-T (Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor)

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) Report 17: Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T) (8.2.10.17).
- 1.2 Letter from Smithville (8.3.10.25).
- 1.3 Confidential letter from CER re 8.3.10.25 (8.2.10.28).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.  
Grounds: The report was requested by the previous synod and arrived on time.
- 2.2 The letter from Smithville was declared admissible.  
Grounds: The letter interacts with a report to GS 2025 and was received on time.
- 2.3 The letter from the CER was declared admissible.

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Grounds: The letter was received on time, and pertains to matters raised by Smithville.

### 3. Observations

#### 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 127) decided:

- [3.1] To instruct the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - [3.1.1] In conjunction with the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church to provide assistance within the normal ambit of CER work that would be of benefit to the Reformed Churches in Indonesia Timor (GGRI-Timor);
  - [3.1.2] As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
  - [3.1.3] To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### 3.2 From the CER report, the following:

- 3.2.1 The CER “were thankful for a face-to-face meeting in September, 2022. Additional effort via email has been made to engage, but we have not heard back.”
- 3.2.2 Since 2019, CRCA and then CER have been available to help resolve the differences between the GGRI-T and GGRCI.
  - 3.2.2.1 “So far there has been no positive response in regard to this from the GGRI-T.”
  - 3.2.2.2 “Until all parties are willing to engage in peaceful, open communication with the goal of brotherly unity and cooperation according to the Word of God, no positive progress can be expected.”
- 3.2.3 “... the mandate with respect to the GGRI-Timor can be continued with some modification. It is important to continue to show willingness to interact with deputies of the GGRI-T.”
- 3.2.4 “As the GGRI-T have arisen as a result of mission work undertaken by the Smithville CanRC and [since they] still maintain contact with this church, it makes sense for the CER to keep lines of communication with the Mission Board of the Smithville church open concerning the GGRI-T.”
- 3.2.5 “The CER also is grateful for having been able to periodically connect with Smithville Mission Board during the past few years.”

#### 3.3 The CER recommends that Synod decide:

- 3.3.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact with the Reformed Churches in Timor, Indonesia (GGRI-T) according to the adopted rules;
- 3.3.2 To instruct the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 3.3.2.1 To maintain open lines of communication with the Smithville CanRC to be aware of opportunities within the normal ambit of CER work to benefit the GGRI-T;
  - 3.3.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) as we interact with the GGRI-T;

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- 3.3.2.3 To continue to communicate to the GGRI-T a willingness to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
- 3.3.2.4 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the GGRI-T to the churches 6 months prior the convening of the next general synod.
- 3.4 Smithville expresses concern with a statement made in the CER GGRCI report regarding STAKRI. They would have appreciated being consulted prior to this being published in the report.
  - 3.4.1 The CER provided background material in a letter.
- 3.5 Smithville feels that the CER has not interacted with them enough and feel that “it would be helpful for us to be included in dialogue with the committee.”
- 3.6 Smithville has “witnessed the faithfulness, dedication, and growth of the GGRI-T over the past 20 years,” and questions whether it is “wise for us to withhold the right hand of fellowship from this federation and judge them at arm’s length when they are striving to be faithful to God’s Word within their immediate cultural and ecclesiastical context.”

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T) have arisen as a result of mission work undertaken by the Smithville CanRC and they still maintain contact with this church .
- 4.2 It is important to continue to show willingness to assist the GGRI-T in promoting ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia according to the Word of God.
- 4.3 Given that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) are geographically closer to Indonesia than the CanRC, it is prudent that the CER share information with these churches and work in close conjunction with them as well as with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) (the latter because of their close connection to the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI)).
- 4.4 The CER recognizes the need for ongoing dialogue with Smithville on issues regarding ecclesiastical relationships in Indonesia and has recommended including this in the mandate.
- 4.5 The witness of Smithville to the faith of the GGRI-T is commendable, but the CER report indicates that the deputies from the GGRI-T themselves minimally engage with the synodically appointed committee despite repeated attempts.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact (EC) with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia - Timor (GGRI-T) according to the adopted rules;
- 5.2 To instruct the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
  - 5.2.1 To maintain open lines of communication with the Smithville CanRC to be aware of opportunities within the normal ambit of CER work to benefit the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T);

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- 5.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) as the CER interacts with the GGRI-T;
- 5.2.3 To continue to communicate to the GGRI-T a willingness to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
- 5.2.4 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the GGRI-T to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED****Article 153 – Overture RSW 2024: Infant Baptism Form**

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on an overture from RSW 2024 regarding the Liturgical Form for the Baptism of Infants. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 154 – CRTS (Board of Governors)****1. Material**

- 1.1 CRTS Board of Governors' Report to GS 2025 (8.2.6.1).
- 1.2 CRTS Supplemental Report to GS 2025 (8.2.6.2).
- 1.3 Letter from Toronto (Bethel) CanRC re CRTS sixth professor (8.3.6.1).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report from the CRTS Board of Governors was declared admissible.  
Ground: This report was mandated by the previous synod and arrived on time
- 2.2 The letter from Toronto CanRC was declared admissible.  
Ground: It interacts with a report to GS 2025 and arrived on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 The report of the Board of Governors (hereafter "the Board") provides an overview of its effort to ensure the continued operation of the Theological College in Hamilton (CRTS). With the faithful support of the churches, the work, training, and instruction at CRTS has continued without interruption since GS 2022. The Board appreciates the contribution of non-teaching staff to the smooth running of CRTS. Since GS 2022, 19 students have graduated with an MDiv degree.
- 3.2 From the CRTS Report, the following:
  - 3.2.1 GS 2022 appointed to the Board of Governors brs. A. Bartels and H. Post, and Revs. J. Temple and J. VanSpronsen with their terms to continue to 2031.
  - 3.2.2 The following brothers have completed their terms as governors: Revs. John Louwerse, Joe Poppe, and James Slaa; brs. Peter Vandersluis and Kasper VanVeen.
  - 3.2.3 Our Lord took to himself Dr. N.H. Gootjes on August 20, 2023.

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3.2.4 Dr. R. Bredenhof began his work at the seminary in January 2023. He began his teaching responsibilities as Professor of Ministry and Mission in the fall of 2023 and took on the role of Pastoral Training Program Director in June 2024.

3.2.5 The Board decided to make the position of teaching assistant permanent starting in the 2022-2023 academic year, helping the faculty up to 20 hours per week. Currently the position is held by CRTS graduate Raoul Kingma.

3.2.6 The matter of faculty succession has had the attention of the Board and Senate in recent years. The Board notes that five professors will (DV) retire within a few years of each other (around the year 2035).

3.2.7 As decided by Synod 2022, Dr. J. VanVliet was appointed as Principal of the seminary for a three-year term from 2022 to 2025. The Board recommends to GS 2025 to give leave to the Board to re-appoint Dr. VanVliet as Principal of the seminary for another three-year term, for the academic years 2025 to 2028.

3.2.8 At its meeting on January 12, 2023, the Board approved the Mature Student Policy to be used on a trial-basis for two years. This policy allows mature students over the age of 30 to enroll in the MDiv program at CRTS without a bachelor's degree, while still maintaining the academic integrity of the program.

3.2.9 The 2022, 2023 and 2024 Annual Reports of the Finance and Property Committee along with audited Annual Financial Reports for the fiscal years ending December 31 for 2021, 2022, and 2023 are included in the report.

3.2.10 Regarding support from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA), the Board requests GS 2025 to take note of the following:

3.2.10.1 The FRCA continues to express deep appreciation for CRTS and the training their students receive. Their exploration of a domestic seminary (Australian Reformed Theological Seminary – ARTS) does not stem from dissatisfaction with CRTS but from a desire to fulfill CO-FRCA art. 19 in a more direct, geographically appropriate way, including providing accredited theological education within Australia.

3.2.10.2 Four options for a seminary were outlined by Synod-FRCA 2024: (1) Become an affiliate of CRTS; (2) Accredited via Australian College of Theology; (3) Independently accredited ARTS; (4) A phased approach starting with 1). While options 2 and 3 present significant challenges, Option 1 is more attainable and allows for ongoing collaboration between CRTS and the FRCA, without creating unhealthy competition for faculty or students.

3.2.10.3 Given the focus on Option 1, governance became a central issue. Both the CRTS Act and ATS standards require a single governing board over any affiliate campus. Two governance models were discussed:

**Model 1:** Appointing FRCA members to the CRTS Board, which would require amending the Act via the Ontario legislature. The CRTS Board has ruled this out, due to the risks of reopening the Act, which has served the seminary well since 1981.

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**Model 2:** A standing *advisory committee* of FRCA members that provides input on affiliate-related matters. The CRTS Board supports further discussion of this model, and the FRCA Synod 2024 has confirmed that they would accept this advisory model if offered.

3.2.10.4 Synod-FRCA 2024 emphasized the need to consider faculty and student numbers, finances, and the potential impact on local churches before launching a seminary. They referenced CRTS's suggestion that a new seminary should only proceed when CRTS approaches 50 students and at least eight suitable professors are available across the CanRC and FRCA.

3.2.10.5 Looking ahead, the FRCA will consult further on the four models and explore support from Asia-Pacific churches. Deputies have been mandated to develop a long-term, specific, and affordable plan toward an ARTS by 2040, including:

- consultations with Asia-Pacific churches;
- steps and timelines for each seminary model;
- cost estimates (establishment and operation for 12 students and 4 professors);
- church support levels; and
- monitoring key challenges.

The CRTS Board remains committed to working closely with the FRCA deputies, seeking the Lord's wisdom as we continue serving his church together.

3.2.11 The Board of Governors is proposing significant changes to the bylaws of the seminary.

In summary, the changes to the bylaws fall within one of four categories:

1. Change required to be in compliance with ONCA (Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act);
2. Change required to reflect actual practice;
3. Removal of bylaws which are no longer necessary to keep in the bylaws since we have clear Board-approved policies in place on those topics;
4. Clean up language.

There are two additions and one change to the Bylaw that the Board would like to draw to the attention of Synod:

1. In article 3.02 Qualifications (of Governors), the following was added for clarity: "No person shall be a Governor unless he is eligible to serve as an officer bearer in his local Church." While the Board has always assumed all governors must be male (given their supervisory role over Ministers of the Word), this was not explicitly stated. The Academic Committee is already restricted to ministers (and thus male), but this had not been clarified for the Finance and Property Committee.

In light of discussions on the ATS Diversity Report, the Board reaffirmed its position that all governors, including on the Finance and Property Committee, must be male. To reflect this while minimizing legal risk, the Board adopted wording proposed by lawyer Karl Veldkamp.

2. A new membership section was added to meet ONCA requirements. While the churches could be defined as members, this would require annual meetings and direct appointment of governors. Since synods already appoint governors and oversee CRTS, the Bylaw now defines the governors themselves as members. This preserves current practice while satisfying legal obligations.
3. The Bylaw now clarifies substitute appointments. Previously, it required six substitutes for ministerial governors and said nothing about non-ministerial ones, leading to inconsistent synod decisions. The revised Bylaw reduces ministerial substitutes to one per regional synod and adds two substitutes for non-ministerial governors, making the process clearer and more manageable.

### 3.3 The Board of Governors recommends:

- 3.3.1 To receive this report and all its appendices;
- 3.3.2 To acknowledge the expiration of the terms of office of Revs. J. Louwerse, J. Poppe and J. Slaa as well as brothers P. Vandersluis and K. VanVeen and to express gratitude for their contributions to the work of the Board;
- 3.3.3 Pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of Bylaw 13 to appoint, elect, or re-appoint six active ministers to hold office until the next general synod and to appoint at least two substitutes, one from each regional synod area, keeping in mind that the Bylaws prohibit anyone from serving more than three consecutive terms and keeping in mind that:
  - a. The following brother was appointed by Synod 2019 and is eligible for reappointment for one more term: from Regional Synod East, Rev. C. VanderVelde;
  - b. The following brothers were appointed by Synod 2022 and are eligible for reappointment for two more terms: from Regional Synod East, Rev. J. Temple and from Regional Synod West, Rev. J. VanSpronsen;
  - c. Along with the reappointments, Synod needs to appoint two active ministers from Regional Synod West and one active minister from Regional Synod East to hold the office of governor, along with one substitute from each regional synod area.
- 3.3.4 Pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of Bylaw 13, to appoint, elect, or re-appoint five non-ministerial governors and to appoint at least two substitutes, keeping in mind that the Bylaws prohibit anyone from serving more than three consecutive terms and keeping in mind that:
  - a. The following brother was appointed by Synod 2019 and is eligible for reappointment for one more term: br. A. Datema;
  - b. The following brothers were appointed by Synod 2022 and are eligible for reappointment for two more terms: brs. A. Bartels and H. Post;
  - c. Along with the reappointments, Synod needs to appoint two non-ministerial governors. The Board's recommendation for these appointments will be found in a separate letter which will also contain *curricula vitae*. In

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addition, GS 2025 should appoint two substitutes for the non-ministerial governors.

- 3.3.5 To request the churches to continue to remember in their prayers the needs of Mrs. G. Deddens, Mrs. M. DeJong, Mrs. D. Gootjes, Dr. and Mrs. Van Dam, Dr. and Mrs. Visscher, and Dr. and Mrs. De Visser;
- 3.3.6 To give leave to the Board to appoint Dr. J. Van Vliet as Principal for the academic years 2025- 2028;
- 3.3.7 To approve the changes to the Bylaws described in this report;
- 3.3.8 To approve all other decisions and actions of the Board and of its committees for the years 2022, 2023, and 2024 until the date of this report;
- 3.3.9 To mandate the Board to express gratitude for the support from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia;
- 3.3.10 To consider the audited financial statements and the report of the Auditor for the previous fiscal periods; to relieve the Treasurer of the Board of all responsibilities for these fiscal periods; to support and recommend the reappointment of DBK Accounting as Auditor until the next general synod, subject to the discretion and direction of the Board;
- 3.3.11 To acknowledge with gratitude the financial contributions of the Women's Savings Action to the well-being of the seminary.

3.4 From the CRTS Supplemental Report, the following:

- 3.4.1 In the 2024 Report of the Finance and Property Committee the 2025 assessment was set at \$100 per communicant member. Since that time the Board decided to increase the assessment by \$1 for 2025 to cover some additional expenses.
- 3.4.2 The Board of Governors request that GS 2025 approve two additional bylaw changes below:
  1. Bylaw 13 section 1.01 defines an Adjunct Professor as "*someone who holds a doctorate degree, is a professor at another institution of learning, and who instructs a course or courses.*" *The Board proposes to change this definition of an Adjunct Professor to "someone who holds a doctorate degree or an appropriate master's degree, is a professor at another institution of learning, and who instructs a course or courses.*" This brings the minimum qualification of an adjunct professor in line with that of a full-time professor.
  2. Bylaw 13 section 14.06c currently states: "*Credits obtained in any course leading to a diploma or a degree should only remain valid for a period of five (5) years unless the diploma or degree is obtained, or an extension has been granted by the Senate.*" Upon further review, the Board proposes to change this to: "*The maximum time limit to complete a diploma or degree is seven years (including any leave of absence or withdrawal period) unless an extension has been granted by Senate.*" This new formulation is in line with commonly accepted academic standards.
- 3.4.3 The BoG considered the matter of a bursary fund for those who pursue advanced studies beyond the MDiv degree. Generally speaking, those who pursue advanced studies fall into one of two categories:

1. Students who pursue advanced studies immediately after the completion of their studies at CRTS and *before* becoming eligible for call.
2. Ministers who pursue advanced studies after some time in the ministry while continuing to hold their office as Minister of the Word.

The BoG would like to propose a bursary fund for those students who fall into the first category, namely those who have not been declared eligible for call but rather pursue advanced studies first.

#### 3.4.3.1 **Bursary Proposal for Graduating Students Pursuing Advanced Studies**

Graduating CRTS students with strong academic potential and faculty prospects may be eligible for a \$15,000 bursary to support further theological studies. Eligibility is determined by the Academic Committee (AC), with Senate input and an interview with the applicant. The bursary, called the Advanced Theological Studies Assistance (ATSA) Bursary, can be renewed annually based on continued study and reassessment. It is intended as partial support, not full coverage of living expenses, and differs from current CRTS student funding.

Funds would be distributed through the existing Needy Students Fund (NSF), avoiding the need for a new fund or structure. The NSF may slightly increase assessments to accommodate this bursary and has confirmed it has no objection. Synod should update the mandate for the NSF [*sic* – should be of the CNST] if the proposal is adopted. An application form will be created using the NSF's current format, gathering details on study plans and financial need. Reapplicants must resubmit each year, with progress and financial updates. Support may extend up to two years for MTh and five years for PhD studies.

#### 3.4.3.2 Precise wording of criteria would be established by the Senate and the Academic Committee and would include matters such as:

- 1) exceptionally strong academic performance;
- 2) strong work ethic and time management, particularly demonstrating the ability to stay focussed on large projects;
- 3) evident spiritual maturity and a disposition to work well with others;
- 4) financial need of the applicant;
- 5) the long-term needs of the seminary, looking toward potential future professors for each department.

#### 3.4.3.3 Summary Steps of ATSA Bursary Process.

The applicant submits an application to the AC and copies the Senate. The AC, using established criteria and Senate input, determines eligibility and issues a written recommendation. If approved, the student forwards the form and recommendation to the NSF, which issues the bursary as a lump sum. Repeat applicants must begin the process anew each year.

For ministers already serving, who are not eligible for this bursary, support for advanced studies should come from their local church, potentially assisted by classis. This support should include financial assistance and

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possibly reduced pastoral workload to enable study without undue strain on the minister and his family.

3.5 Toronto (Bethel) recommends that GS 2025 instruct the CRTS Board of Governors to consider adding a sixth professor, dividing the current portfolio of the Professor of Ministry into two portfolios: Professor of Mission and Professor of Ministry. It states the following considerations:

- 3.5.1 The workload of the current professor as the student body continues to grow.
- 3.5.2 The increasing amount of Foreign Mission and Home Mission activity in the Canadian Reformed churches.
- 3.5.3 As the mission field comes to our local churches, there are many cultural practices that pastors and elders are dealing with. Training in this would be beneficial.
- 3.5.4 Missionaries for both foreign and domestic mission projects will be better prepared for these specialized ministries.
- 3.5.5 Two portfolios would create opportunities for more focus on each discipline.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 Synod notes with thankfulness that the work of the Theological College in Hamilton (CRTS) could continue without interruption between GS 2022 and GS 2025.
- 4.2 Synod notes with mixed feelings of sadness and gladness the passing away of Dr. N.H. Gootjes into glory after a lengthy period of illness.
- 4.3 Synod is grateful to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) for their continued involvement in CRTS, as well as their prayerful and significant financial support.
- 4.4 Synod notes with gratitude that the Pastoral Training Program continues to be beneficial for the students and the churches.
- 4.5 The Board's request to approve all other decisions and actions of the Board and its committees is a legal requirement in accordance with the College Act.
- 4.6 It is wise that the Board has the foresight to make provision to support the training of potential future professors of theology. With respect to the development of criteria for the proposed Graduating Students Pursuing Advanced Studies Bursary, it is important to include a clear commitment to the Reformed confessions.
- 4.7 While the recommendation of Toronto (Bethel) may have merit, it is not mentioned or alluded to in the Board of Governors' Report and has not been considered or discussed by the churches at the minor assemblies.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To receive this report and all its appendices;
- 5.2 To acknowledge the expiration of the terms of office of Revs. J. Louwerse, J. Poppe and J. Slaa as well as brothers P. Vandersluis and K. VanVeen and to express gratitude for their contributions to the work of the Board;
- 5.3 Pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of Bylaw 13 to appoint, elect, or re-appoint six active ministers to hold office until the next general synod and to appoint at

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least two substitutes, one from each regional synod area, keeping in mind that the Bylaws prohibit anyone from serving more than three consecutive terms;

5.4 To appoint two active ministers from Regional Synod West and one active minister from Regional Synod East to hold the office of governor, along with one substitute from each regional synod area;

5.5 Pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of Bylaw 13, to appoint, elect, or re-appoint five non-ministerial governors and to appoint at least two substitutes, keeping in mind that the Bylaws prohibit anyone from serving more than three consecutive terms;

5.6 To request the churches to continue to remember in their prayers the needs of Mrs. G. Deddens, Mrs. M. DeJong, Mrs. D. Gootjes, Dr. and Mrs. Van Dam, Dr. and Mrs. Visscher, and Dr. and Mrs. De Visser;

5.7 To give leave to the Board to appoint Dr. J. Van Vliet as Principal for the academic years 2025- 2028;

5.8 To approve the changes to the Bylaws described in this report;

5.9 To approve all other decisions and actions of the Board and of its committees for the years 2022, 2023, and 2024 until the date of this report;

5.10 To mandate the Board to express gratitude for the support from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA);

5.11 To consider the audited financial statements and the report of the Auditor for the previous fiscal periods; to relieve the Treasurer of the Board of all responsibilities for these fiscal periods; to support and recommend the reappointment of DBK Accounting as Auditor until the next general synod, subject to the discretion and direction of the Board;

5.12 To acknowledge with gratitude, the financial contributions of the Women's Savings Action to the well-being of the seminary;

5.13 To accept the Bursary Proposal for Graduating Students Pursuing Advanced Studies as found in Observation 3.4.3.1;

5.14 To instruct the Committee for Needy Students of Theology (CNST) to collect and distribute the funds for the Bursary Proposal and to adjust Synod's mandate to the CNST accordingly (cf. GS 2025 art. 167 rec. 5.4.2);

5.15 To not adopt the recommendation of the Toronto (Bethel) CanRC at this time.

5.16 To mandate the Board of Governors to submit its report on its activities to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

Revs. J. Louwerse and J. Poppe abstained as members of the Board of Governors.

**Article 155 – Overture RSW 2024: CO art. 30 (*Ecclesiastical Route*)**

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on an overture from RSW 2024 re CO art. 30 (*Ecclesiastical Route*). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

*Synod was adjourned for committee work.*

**Day 9 — Evening Session**  
**Thursday, May 15, 2025**

**Article 156 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman had the meeting sing Hymn 52:1,2. He observed that all synod members were present.

**Article 157 – SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section One, Parts 8-12 and Three, Parts 15, 16 (Administrative)**

**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*, Section One, Parts 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and Section Three, Parts 15, 16 (8.2.8.1).
- 1.2 SCBP Appendix 3 – Protocol for making changes to the Australian *Book of Praise*. (8.2.8.1).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The report Section One, Parts 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, along with Appendix 3, as well as Section Three Parts 15, 16 were declared admissible.

Grounds: The report is from a standing synodical committee and was received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 120) gave the following mandate:
  - 3.1.1 To continue maintaining its archives (at CRTS) and website [www.bookofpraise.ca](http://www.bookofpraise.ca).
  - 3.1.2 To maintain good contact with the Standing Committee for the Australian *Book of Praise* (SCABP).
  - 3.1.3 To maintain its corporate status for the purpose of protecting the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in matters concerning the *Book of Praise*.
  - 3.1.4 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work.
  - 3.1.5 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.
- 3.2 The SCBP provided the churches with its permanent mailing address:

Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP)  
c/o Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary  
110 West 27th Street  
Hamilton, Ontario,  
L9C 5A1
- 3.3 The SCBP provided the churches with its email address: [bookofpraise@canrc.org](mailto:bookofpraise@canrc.org).

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#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 GS 2025 acknowledges with thankfulness the work of the SCBP in executing the mandate it received from GS 2022 with respect to Section One, items 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and Section Three items 15 and 16.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To thank the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) for its work over the last 3 years in maintaining contact with the Standing Committee for the Australian *Book of Praise* (SCABP) and for agreeing to their draft proposal for a protocol agreement for making changes to the Australian *Book of Praise* (cf. Appendix 3 of the SCBP report to GS 2025);
- 5.2 To give thanks that Synod-FRCA 2024 decided to maintain good contact with the SCBP;
- 5.3 To thank the SCBP for maintaining its status as a corporation, ensuring all necessary documents are kept up to date;
- 5.4 To thank the SCBP for maintaining archives in the CRTS library and for conducting the triennial inspection of the archives;
- 5.5 To thank the SCBP for continuing to maintain its website in support of the efforts of promotion and awareness for the *Book of Praise*;
- 5.6 To thank the SCBP for appointing Mr. Brian Vanderhout to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;
- 5.7 To thank the members of the SCBP for their commitment and the work they have accomplished over the last three years. Synod especially notes with thankfulness the work and dedication of the following brothers who are retiring from the committee: Rev. D. Agema and Mr. M. Jongsma;
- 5.8 To express appreciation to the following brothers who provided expert advice to the SCBP in their respective areas of expertise: Mr. A. den Hollander, Dr. J. Smith, and Rev. D. Wynia;
- 5.9 To mandate the SCBP:
  - 5.9.1 To maintain good contact with the Standing Committee for the Australian *Book of Praise*;
  - 5.9.2 To continue maintaining its archives (at CRTS) and website: [www.bookofpraise.ca](http://www.bookofpraise.ca);
  - 5.9.3 To maintain its corporate status for the purpose of protecting the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in matters concerning the *Book of Praise*;
  - 5.9.4 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;
  - 5.9.5 To submit its report to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

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**Article 158 – Appeals against GS 2022 art. 105: Hymn Cap****1. Material**

- 1.1 Appeal from Brampton (Grace) re GS2022 art. 105 (8.6.1.1).
- 1.2 Appeal from Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) re GS 2022 art. 105 (8.6.1.2).
- 1.3 Appeal from Flamborough (Redemption) re GS 2022 art. 105 (8.6.1.3).
- 1.4 Appeal from Glanbrook (Trinity) re GS 2022 art. 105 (8.6.1.4).
- 1.5 Appeal from Sardis re GS 2022 art. 105 (8.6.1.5).
- 1.6 Appeal from Toronto (Bethel) re GS 2022 art. 105 (8.6.1.6, 8.6.1.7, 8.6.1.8).
- 1.7 Appeal from Vernon re GS2022 art. 105 (8.6.1.9).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The appeals were declared admissible.

Grounds: The appeals were received on time and they address a decision of a previous general synod

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 Brampton (Grace), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth), Flamborough (Redemption), Glanbrook (Trinity), Sardis, Toronto (Bethel), and Vernon appeal the decision of GS 2022 (art. 105) not to adopt the overture from RSE 2020 to remove the current hymn cap and the overture from RSW 2021 to rescind the decision of GS 2004 art. 115.

- 3.2 GS 2022 art. 105 decided:

[3.2] To deny the recommendation of both overtures to remove the cap of 100 hymns regarding the *Book of Praise*.

- 3.3 GS 2022 art. 105 included the following grounds for its decision:

3.3.1 GS 2004 (Art. 115 Obs. 6.1.1, Cons. 6.2.1, Rec. 6.3) expressed the principle that the Psalms have a predominant place in the liturgy of the Reformed churches, and on that basis, set a limit. Any decision to rescind the conclusion of GS 2004 should demonstrate that the basis of that decision is erroneous. [4.2.1]

3.3.2 Although RSE 2020 acknowledged the unique, privileged, and predominant role of the singing of the Psalms in the liturgy of the churches, and that they should be retained as such, it then concluded that limiting the number of hymns in the *Book of Praise* is not an effective way of achieving this goal. Many of the churches, however, appreciated how the hymn cap flows from the principle of the predominance of the Psalms in Reformed liturgy. [4.2.2]

3.3.3 Additionally, RSW 2021 argued that “it is clear from the Preface of the *Book of Praise* that the hymns are not less desirable” (Cons. 2.5). This argument is a round-about way of stating that, when it comes to the selection of songs to sing in the worship services, there is to be no distinction between hymns and the Psalms. This is not the Reformed principle held since the Reformation, and stated time and again by our general synods (e.g., GS 2004 Art. 44 Cons. 4.3; GS 2007 Art. 133 Cons. 4.2; GS 2013 Art. 173 Cons. 3.6). RSW 2021 did not treat the Preface from the *Book of Praise* forthrightly, specifically where it states, “Although in Reformed liturgy the Psalms have a predominant place, our churches have not excluded the use of scriptural hymns.” [4.2.3]

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3.3.4 Although RSW 2021 argued that a limit of 100 hymns makes it likely that there would be less room for hymns that are traditionally sung during specific seasons of the Christian calendar, such a claim is unsubstantiated. In fact, as one church argued, for hymns to be useful to the churches, they would largely centre around the days of commemoration and would leave out many other hymns of praise, adoration, supplication, petition, etc. since there are psalms which do the same. [4.2.4]

3.3.5 Although RSE 2020 and RSW 2021 suggested that the hymn cap needlessly limits the churches in their choice of other Christian songs, limiting the churches' selection is exactly the purpose of CO Art. 55, and therefore, does not serve as an argument for additional hymns. [4.2.5]

3.3.6 Although RSE 2020 and RSW 2021 argued that a hymn cap does not guarantee the primacy of Psalm singing, numerous churches, both in favour and against removing the hymn cap, have argued for a change to CO Art. 55 that includes a statement re the primacy of Psalm singing as a way to maintain the practice of this principle. [4.2.6]

3.3.7 It is true that RSE 2020 and RSW 2021 argued that the specified limit of 100 hymns is arbitrary and has no other function than to force the churches to choose from among the best hymns for inclusion in the *Book of Praise* rather than allow for the consideration of all best hymns, also as they continue to be written. [4.2.7]. This implies, however, that the *Book of Praise* will never be a completed book, and that it needs to include an unlimited number of hymns. [4.2.7.1]

3.3.8 Although RSW 2021 argued that a limit on the hymns means that the churches will have to struggle with the process of removing good hymns to make room for better hymns, this process has benefits since it continuously forces us to evaluate the strength of new hymns by comparing them to existing ones. Without the limit on hymns, the churches may well resort to a default practice of simply adding new hymns without deciding if they are an improvement on existing hymns. A hymn cap helps the churches to be careful when adding hymns. [4.2.8]

3.4 Glanbrook (Trinity) and Sardis note that GS 2022 (art. 105 gr. 4.2.2) uses a statement from one church that a greater number of psalms than hymns is a visible testimony that psalms are predominant. Glanbrook (Trinity) argues that this 'visible' predominance could be achieved by other means. Sardis asserts that the basis for a hymn cap does not flow from the principle of predominance of the Psalms in Reformed liturgical practice.

3.5 Brampton (Grace), Glanbrook (Trinity), Toronto (Bethel), and Vernon argue that GS 2022 (art. 105) gr. 4.2.1 incorrectly required churches to demonstrate that the decision to adopt a hymn cap was erroneous. Glanbrook (Trinity) notes that in GS 2022 art. 62 (gr. 4.2), GS 2022 stated that a previous decision can be revisited as proposals substantiated by new grounds. As the matter before GS 2022 were proposals with new grounds they did not have to demonstrate the decision of GS 2004 was erroneous.

3.6 Brampton (Grace) and Sardis argue that GS 2022 inconsistently denied the overtures to remove the hymn cap of 100 but then approved provisional hymns for testing and use in the worship service that exceeded the cap it had just endorsed.

3.7. Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) and Flamborough (Redemption) argue that:

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3.7.1 GS 2022 did not interact substantively with the point that removing the hymn cap is to increase the *selection* of hymns that may be sung, not to increase the *amount* of hymns sung [*emphasis in the original*] and that it is a fallacy to reason that the number of available hymns need to be limited to maintain the predominance of psalms in the liturgy [see GS 2022 art. 105 gr. 4.2.1, 4.2.1.1, 4.2.1.2, 4.2.2].

3.7.2 It is a fallacy to state that limiting the churches' selection is exactly the purpose of CO art. 55. Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) and Flamborough (Redemption) argue that the point of CO art. 55 is to limit the churches to what has been approved by general synods, but it does not limit general synods from expanding the approved hymns [see GS 2022 rt. 105 gr. 4.2.5].

3.8 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth), Flamborough (Redemption), and Glanbrook (Trinity) argue that GS 2022 incorrectly conflated the overtures from RSE 2020 and RSW 2021 regarding the hymn cap with statements from churches who wanted a statement in CO art. 55 regarding the primacy of psalms [see GS. 2022 art. 105 gr. 4.2.6].

3.9 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) and Vernon argue that GS 2022 improperly concluded that the removal of the hymn cap means the *Book of Praise* will never be completed.

3.10 Flamborough (Redemption) and Sardis note that the overture from RSW 2021 addresses how the hymn cap was established in 2004. They believe it did not originate from a matter brought forward by the churches and, therefore, it should not have been put in place in 2004.

3.11 GS 2001 (art. 97) provided the following mandate to the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP): "That this Committee receive submissions and proposals for additional hymns from the churches with the reasons for their suitability, evaluate them in accordance with the requirements set out by General Synod Edmonton, 1965, and submit a selection to the churches prior to subsequent General Synods". As the SCBP sought to fulfil its mandates to expand and review the song book, it adopted additional principles and guidelines. These were shared with the churches and the general synods throughout the years and functioned within the committee's work.

3.12 Sardis and Vernon believe it is questionable that one of the goals of a church songbook is to make the congregation know it well, memorize it, and make it part of everyday life.

#### 4. Considerations

4.1 GS 2022 correctly noted (1) that an appeal to rescind the decision of GS 2004 would need to demonstrate that the basis of that decision was erroneous and, (2) that a decision could be revisited as proposals substantiated by new grounds (GS 2022 art. 62). The two overtures before GS 2022 (art. 105 gr. 4.2) were proposals substantiated by new grounds, not appeals of a GS 2004 decision. Therefore, GS 2022 erred in art. 105 gr. 4.2.1 by requiring the overtures to demonstrate that the basis for a previous decision was erroneous. There is no burden of proof for proposals like these.

4.2 Brampton (Grace) and Sardis are wrong in criticizing GS 2022 for approving hymns for testing that exceeded the hymn cap. Provisional approval and testing does not equate to inclusion in the *Book of Praise*.

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- 4.3 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) and Flamborough (Redemption) correctly argue that GS 2022 did not interact substantively with the point that removing the hymn cap is to increase the selection of hymns that may be sung, not to increase how often hymns are sung. For example, adding many Christmas hymns would not result in them being sung frequently.
- 4.4 It is a fallacy to reason that the number of available hymns necessarily needs to be limited to maintain the predominance of psalms in the liturgy. The principle of the foundational role of the Psalms ought not to be confused with the practice of applying a hymn cap.
- 4.5 GS 2022 (art. 105 gr. 4.2.5) erred in stating that the “exact purpose of CO Art 55” was to limit the churches’ selection. CO art. 55 (as it was at that time) only ensured the songbook was common to all churches. A general synod could significantly increase the number of hymns with no change to CO art. 55 if it chose to do so.
- 4.6 Although there would be “a limit,” that does not mean that the purpose of CO art. 55 (as it was at that time) was “to limit” the selection of hymns. Its purpose was to ensure that the churches were singing only psalms and hymns approved by general synod, regardless of the number of approved hymns.
- 4.7 GS 2022 (art. 105 gr. 4.2) incorrectly conflated the overtures from RSE 2020 and RSW 2021 regarding the hymn cap with statements from churches that wanted a statement in CO art. 55 regarding the primacy of psalms. Neither removing nor maintaining a hymn cap conflicts with the principle of the primacy of the Psalms.
- 4.8 GS 2022 (art. 105, gr. 4.2.7.1) believed that removing the hymn cap will necessarily mean that the *Book of Praise* will never be a completed book. This may or may not be true, depending on decisions of subsequent general synods, but this should not be considered a basis for maintaining a hymn cap. Not only that, but elsewhere GS 2022 (art. 105 gr. 4.2.8) stated that “the process of removing good hymns to make room for better hymns” will happen “continuously”.
- 4.9 To have the congregation know the common song book well, to memorize it, and to make it part of everyday life is a laudable goal. Adding additional hymns beyond the hymn cap does not necessarily prevent this goal from being achieved.
- 4.10 Flamborough (Redemption) and Sardis correctly note that the hymn cap established in 2004 did not originate from a matter brought forward by the churches. It was suggested by the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) as part of their proposed guidelines in the process of increasing the number of hymns from 65 to what became 85 (2014) and was applied throughout the process. When initially brought forward in the SCBP Report to GS 2004, there was no concern expressed by any of the churches, and those few that did interact with it were supportive of the hymn cap of 100.
- 4.11 When churches began considering the expansion of hymns beyond the 85 approved by GS 2013, a limit of 100 quickly became the subject of concern and criticism. RSE 2017 and RSW 2018 dealt with proposals to adopt the Trinity Psalter-Hymnal, which would have been a “quick way to satisfy the desire for … a greater variety of hymns”. (GS 2019 art. 142 cons. 3.3). Appeals (GS 2022 art. 62) and overtures (GS 2022 art. 105) arose from the churches, the latter via RSE 2020 and RSW 2021, to eliminate the hymn cap. The matter of increasing or eliminating the hymn cap has been alive in the

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churches ever since GS 2013 authorized the revised and expanded *Book of Praise* (2014).

4.12 Synod judged it reasonable to deal with the appeals from Brampton (Grace), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth), Flamborough (Redemption), Glanbrook (Trinity), Sardis, Toronto (Bethel), and Vernon together because all seven of them appealed the same decision of GS 2022 (art. 105), all did so by questioning the grounds for the decision, all identified the issue cited above in cons. 4.1 as supporting evidence, and nearly all specifically requested that GS 2025 remove the hymn cap.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To sustain the appeals of the Brampton (Grace) CanRC, the Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC, the Flamborough (Redemption) CanRC, the Glanbrook (Trinity) CanRC, the Sardis CanRC, the Toronto (Bethel) CanRC, and the Vernon CanRC.
- 5.2 To affirm that the hymn cap is null and void.

## ADOPTED

G. Boot and A. Jairam abstained as per CO art. 32.

### Article 159 – SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section One, Part 4 (Awareness)

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 SCBP report to GS 2025 (8.2.8.1).
- 1.2 Letter from Aldergrove (8.3.8.1.1).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.  
Grounds: The report is from a standing synodical committee and arrived on time.
- 2.2 The letter was declared admissible.  
Grounds: This letter interacts with this part of the SCBP report and arrived on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 120) mandated the SCBP to “To foster an increased awareness of the existence of the *Book of Praise* among others in the English-speaking world.”
- 3.2 The SCBP notes with gratitude the many expressions of interest in our *Book of Praise*.
- 3.3 The SCBP requests that GS 2025 continue the mandate to foster an increased awareness of the *Book of Praise*.
- 3.4 Aldergrove suggests investigating the open-source option to add the *Book of Praise* to [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org).

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The SCBP has fulfilled its mandate to foster awareness of the *Book of Praise*.
- 4.2 Adding all or most (due to copyright issues) of the *Book of Praise* to [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org), [www.canrc.org](http://www.canrc.org), and [www.bookofpraise.ca](http://www.bookofpraise.ca) may increase awareness by making the riches of the *Book of Praise* available for Christians to use worldwide.

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4.3 The funding model should not inhibit the distribution and availability of the *Book of Praise*.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

5.1 To mandate the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) to foster awareness of the *Book of Praise* among others in the English-speaking world;

5.2 To mandate the SCBP to publish as many of the songs in the *Book of Praise* as possible on the federational websites ([www.canrc.org](http://www.canrc.org), and [www.bookofpraise.ca](http://www.bookofpraise.ca)), noting:

- 5.2.1 This should include all non-copyrighted songs, all songs for which the SCBP holds copyright, and all songs the SCBP can gain permission to publish freely and broadly;
- 5.2.2 This may require negotiations with and financial compensation for the publisher, Premier Printing (see GS 2025 art. 160 rec. 5.4);

5.3 To mandate the SCBP to investigate the possibility of adding the *Book of Praise* to [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org) and return to the next general synod with a recommendation.

## ADOPTED

### Article 160 – SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section One, Part 5 (*Publishing and Funding*)

#### 1. Material

1.1 SCBP report to GS 2025 (8.2.8.1).

1.2 Letters from the churches: Aldergrove (8.3.8.1.1), Elm Creek (8.3.8.1.20), Fergus (Maranatha) (8.3.8.1.24), Grassie (Covenant) (8.3.8.1.30), Guelph (Immanuel) (8.3.8.1.31), Hamilton (Providence) (8.3.8.1.33), St. Albert (8.3.8.1.41), Willoughby Heights (8.3.8.1.46).

#### 2. Admissibility

2.1 The report was declared admissible.  
Grounds: The report is from a standing synodical committee and was received on time.

2.2 Letters from the churches were declared admissible.  
Grounds: The letters from the churches interact with this part of the SCBP report to GS 2025 and were received on time.

#### 3. Observations

3.1 The SCBP was mandated to survey the churches to determine the priority/relative importance regarding types of availability (digital, open-source, print), formatting (e.g., four-part harmony), and other publication variables (including copyright) regarding the *Book of Praise*, as listed in the SCBP report:  
To review the input of the churches and, on that basis, propose a publishing and funding model to GS 2025.

3.2 The SCBP surveyed the churches and discovered:

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- 3.2.1 **Layout:** There is a strong appreciation for the current print editions of our *Book of Praise*. The SCBP is hoping to assist the churches with a digital version with full notation. While a small number of churches would like an authorized four-part version of the songs in our *Book of Praise* either alongside or instead of the current version, the large majority prefer to keep the *Book of Praise* as is.
- 3.2.2 **Copyright:** The SCBP is moving forward with the recommendation that the use of copyrighted songs is a possibility and preference. The SCBP were encouraged to perhaps make available, as an open-source document, a digital version of the non-copyrighted content of our psalms and hymns for anyone to use. This and other decisions about what might be made available will have to be determined, depending on funding considerations.
- 3.2.3 **Funding considerations:** Many churches suggest the publication of an authorized augment. There is a strong sentiment that we should not publish a new version of the *Book of Praise* too quickly, especially in light of potential revisions to liturgical forms. There is a general consensus that the costs for the layout and publication should be shared by the churches rather than by the publisher. The publisher could then charge a fair price for printing only.
- 3.3 On the matter of funding, the SCBP has been unable to complete the discussion with the publisher. Therefore, the SCBP asks that this mandate be renewed for another three years.
- 3.4 The SCBP believes that the publication of an authorized augment with the layout and publication costs borne by the churches in common would be the most stewardly approach at this time. Most churches that responded to the report agree.
- 3.5 Elm Creek wonders if analysis has been done considering the difference between printing a small augment or an updated *Book of Praise*.
- 3.6 Willoughby Heights suggests that the SCBP be given a mandate to remind the churches annually of their obligations with a view to copyright law, and clear instructions as to how these obligations might be met.
- 3.7 In their report (Section One, Part 6), the SCBP requested that the mandate to renew copyrights where necessary be extended.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The SCBP fulfilled their mandate to survey the churches.
- 4.2 The churches request (and the SCBP desires) to have a digital version of the *Book of Praise* with full notations (including all additions and modifications approved by General Synod 2025) made available to the churches as soon as possible.
- 4.3 To make available a digital version of the non-copyrighted content of our psalms and hymns for anyone to use as an open-source document, the SCBP will need to negotiate a fair agreement with the publisher to compensate them for the costs of layout and publication, including existing stock. Doing that would also make it possible to produce a low-cost digital version of the entire *Book of Praise*.
- 4.4 The SCBP is correct to recognize that, in light of potential revisions to liturgical forms, we should not publish a new version of the *Book of Praise* too quickly. Publishing an

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authorized augment that includes all revised and additional psalms and hymns would be the most stewardly path forward at this time.

- 4.5 Having the churches in common bear the costs of layout and pre-press preparations of an authorized augment is prudent and will make both print and digital versions available at the lowest possible cost.
- 4.6 If general synod approves hymns that are dependent on four-part harmony (e.g. *When Peace Like a River*), the SCBP could continue to publish them in four-part harmony. All other hymns should be published in unison like the rest of the *Book of Praise*.
- 4.7 It is important for the SCBP and the churches to comply with copyright laws.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To thank the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) for their work with respect to the publishing and funding model;
- 5.2 To mandate the SCBP to publish an authorized augment that includes the melody and text of new hymns and alternative psalms approved by GS 2025 and the previously approved changes to Hymns 1, 55, and 58. Any approved alternate psalms or additional hymns that are dependent on four-part harmony should be published in four-part harmony;
- 5.3 To mandate the SCBP to produce digital versions of the *Book of Praise* and the authorized augment with full notations (including all additions and modifications approved by GS 2025) and make these available to the churches as soon as possible;
- 5.4 To mandate the SCBP to negotiate a fair agreement with the publisher to compensate them for the costs of layout and publication (including existing stock) as soon as possible and make available a digital version of the royalty-free content of our psalms and hymns for anyone to use as an open-source document, free of charge and also make available a lower-cost digital version of the entire *Book of Praise*;
- 5.5 To mandate the SCBP to renew copyrights where necessary;
- 5.6 To mandate the SCBP to remind the churches of their obligations with a view to copyright law and provide clear instructions as to how these obligations might be met.

## ADOPTED

### Article 161 – SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section One, Part 7 (“*Principled View*”)

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 SCBP report to GS 2025 (8.2.8.1).
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Attercliffe (8.3.8.1.6), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) (8.3.8.1.9, 8.3.8.1.10), Caledonia (8.3.8.1.11), Calgary (8.3.8.1.12), Carman East (8.3.8.1.13), Chilliwack (8.3.8.1.14), Edmonton (Immanuel) (8.3.8.1.16), Fergus (Maranatha) (8.3.8.1.23), Grassie (Covenant) (8.3.8.1.30), Langley (8.3.8.1.35), Nooksack Valley (8.3.8.1.37), Winnipeg (Grace) (8.3.8.1.44), Willoughby Heights (8.3.8.1.46).

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## 2. Admissibility

2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: The report is from a standing synodical committee and was received on time.

2.2 The letters from the churches were declared admissible.

Grounds: The letters from the churches interact with this part of the SCBP report and were received on time.

## 3. Observations

3.1 Langley suggests that Section One, Part 7 of the SCBP report titled “Proposal for a principled view of the *Book of Praise*” should not be received for consideration by GS 2025. Langley and Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) note that this part of the SCBP report does not reflect the mandate of GS 2022. Langley further argues that the SCBP should restrict their activities to their mandate and that proposals such as these must come from one or more of the churches.

3.2 Many other churches interacted with this part of the SCBP report.

## 4. Considerations

4.1 The SCBP has introduced a new mandate for itself beyond the one given to it by GS 2022. The SCBP should restrict itself to the mandate given.

4.2 Proposals like this one should come from one or more of the churches.

4.3 A general synod should only deal with matters that come to it legitimately.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

5.1 Not to consider Section One, Part 7 of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) report or any parts of the letters from the churches that engage with it.

5.2 To remind the SCBP that it should only deal with the matters mandated to it by a general synod.

## ADOPTED

### Article 162 – SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section Two, Parts 13, 14 (*Corrections*)

## 1. Material

1.1 SCBP report to GS 2025 (8.2.8.1).

1.2 Letters from the following churches: Aldergrove (8.3.8.1.1), Edmonton (Providence) (8.3.8.1.19), Willoughby Heights (8.3.8.1.46).

## 2. Admissibility

2.1 The report was declared admissible.

Grounds: The report was mandated by GS 2022 and was received on time.

2.2 The letters from the churches were declared admissible.

Grounds: These interact with a report to GS 2025 and were received on time.

### 3. Observations

3.1 The Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) recommends the following minor corrections for a future printing of the *Book of Praise*:

- [13.1] Psalm 47:1.4 – The syllable division needs correction: “humb-ling” should be “hum-bling.”
- [13.2] Psalm 52:1.5 – A semicolon is missing at the end of the line. Also, there should be a hyphen preceding “sharp”: ra - zor - sharp.
- [13.3] Psalm 103:3.3 – A period is missing at the end of the line.
- [13.4] Psalm 113:1.1 – The first exclamation mark should be in regular font (not small caps font).
- [13.5] Hymn 30 – Regarding the missing time signature, add the little half-note with the one on top of it (tactus minor symbol) as is found in Hy. 17 and 18.
- [13.6] Hymn 48:1.1 – A comma should be inserted after “Come.”
- [13.7] Athanasian Creed – Article 6, incorrectly has the archaic term “Godhead.” In the prose section of the 1984 *Book of Praise*, this term was replaced with “divinity,” as in Q&A 48 of the Heidelberg Catechism and in articles 33 and 35 of the Athanasian Creed. Its continued use in article 6 of the latter is an oversight in need of correction.
- [13.8] Belgic Confession – In Art. 23, 3rd paragraph, “judgement” in the quote from Ps. 143 should be “judgment,” per the ESV. This error is also in Canons of Dort, I.18, second paragraph, and III/IV, Rejection of Errors 1.
- [13.9] Belgic Confession – Art. 24, 2nd paragraph, Luke 17:10 is incorrectly included within the 4 quotation marks.
- [13.10] Heidelberg Catechism – Lord’s Day 10, q/a 28, footnote 1 needs to be changed from Psalm 39:10 to Psalm 39:9.
- [13.11] Heidelberg Catechism – Lord’s Day 50, footnote 4 needs to be changed from “Ps...62” to “Ps...62:10,” and from “Ps...146” to “Ps...146:3.”
- [13.12] “Prayer for All the Needs of Christendom” (p. 636) and “A Closing Prayer for Ecclesiastical Assemblies” (p. 642), – The reference to “our Queen and her house” needs to be changed to “our King and his house.”

3.2 Willoughby Heights notes that the list of corrections found in section 13 are only those since the last print run. They observe that this list does not include changes made by the decision of a general synod and ask that the SCBP be mandated to supply a list of all the changes that need to be made to the current printed version of the *Book of Praise*, including any to be made to Confessions, Liturgical Forms, and the Church Order, as per decisions of general synods since GS 2013.

3.3 Aldergrove notes that there are some items missing from this list of corrections that should be made to the current *Book of Praise* Hymn 38 (page 421) and Hymn 66 (page 466): the footnotes regarding authorship etc. are a page too early and should be moved to the next page, after the last stanza. Aldergrove recommends that these corrections be added to the list submitted to Synod 2025.

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- 3.4 Edmonton (Providence) opines that Hymn 45 stanza 2, line 2 contains a spelling error in which the phrase “The prisoners leap to lose their chains” should read “the prisoners leap to loose their chains.”
- 3.5 The SCBP submits the following proposals with respect to the *Book of Praise*:
  - 3.5.1 The SCBP recommends restoring Hymn 17:1 to its 2009 version, since GS 2013 unintentionally replaced it with the 1984 rendition without consulting the copyright holder.
  - 3.5.2 The SCBP recommends modifying one line in the liturgical forms for baptism from the present reading, “He adopts us *for his* children and heirs” to “He adopts us as his children and heirs” to cohere with the language of Ephesians 1:5 and Galatians 4:5 (ESV, NASB, and NKJV), and Romans 8:23 (ESV, NASB).
  - 3.5.3 The SCBP addresses one line in the liturgical form for the Lords Supper. It compares the wording of the 1984 *Book of Praise* “by his perfect obedience he has fulfilled for us all the righteousness of God’s law” to the version adopted by GS 2007 “by his perfect obedience he has for us fulfilled the righteousness of God’s law” but recommends a further change to “by his perfect obedience he has fulfilled the righteousness of God’s law *for us*.” The SCBP suggests that the recommended update is more readable and textually clear.
  - 3.5.4 The SCBP recommends changing a Scripture reference in Belgic Confession Art. 5, footnote 3 from 1 John 5:7 to the more straightforward 1 John 5:6b noting that the footnote pointing to 1 John 5:7 by itself does not make much sense.

#### 4. Considerations:

- 4.1 Re Observation 3.1: the SCBP correctly identifies errors or omissions that require correction prior to publication of the new *Book of Praise*.
- 4.2 Re Observation 3.2: Willoughby Heights correctly observes that future revisions to the *Book of Praise* will need to include revisions to the Confessions, Liturgical Forms and Church Order.
- 4.3 Re Observation 3.3: Aldergrove is correct in noting the inconsistent use of footnotes for Hymn 38 (page 421) and Hymn 66 (page 460).
- 4.4 Re Observation 3.4: the concern of Edmonton (Providence) was addressed at GS 2013 (art. 159 obs. 2.4.1 and cons. 3.3) in support of the current wording.
- 4.5 Re Observation 3.5.1: the current wording in Hymn 17:1 (“my soul does magnify”) is to be preferred over the 1984 wording (“my soul will magnify”) as the original Greek employs the present tense. It would be helpful if the SCBP could gain permission from the copyright holder to maintain the current wording.
- 4.6 Re Observation 3.5.2: the proposed correction better reflects the language of the Scriptural references.
- 4.7 Re Observation 3.5.3: the proposed amendment (“by his perfect obedience he has fulfilled the righteousness of God’s law *for us*”) is grammatically inconsistent with the preceding sentence (“he bore *for us* the wrath of God”). The 1984 version referenced by the SCBP presents a more consistent phrasing and superior readability.
- 4.8 Re Observation 3.5.4: the proposed correction is more accurate.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To note the corrections identified by the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) in Observation 3.1;
- 5.2 To forward Considerations 4.2, 4.3, and 4.5 to 4.8 to the SCBP for implementation;
- 5.3 To instruct the SCBP to submit as an appendix in their report to the next general synod a full list of corrigenda to the current printed version of the *Book of Praise*;
- 5.4 That consideration 4.4 serves as an answer to the Edmonton (Providence) CanRC.

## ADOPTED

### Article 163 – Appeal against GS 2019 art. 23 & GS 2022 art. 120 dec. 3.8.1: Lord’s Supper Forms

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal from Kerwood (Grace) (8.6.11.1).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The appeal was declared admissible.

Grounds: It is an appeal against decisions of GS 2019 and 2022 and was received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 Kerwood (Grace) requests GS 2025 to find that: GS 2019 and GS 2022 erred in giving the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP) the mandate “to study and propose appropriate changes as per consideration 3.1, 3.2” (GS 2019 art. 23; Synod 2022 art. 120 dec. 3.8.1) to the Lord’s Supper forms without considering the historical and scriptural implications.
- 3.2 GS 2019 art. 23 mandated the SCBP “to study and propose appropriate changes as per Considerations 3.1, 3.2.” The text of these considerations are as follows:
  - [3.1] “RSE Nov. 2018 makes a valid point that the English language has changed and therefore the use of masculine pronouns in the forms for Lord’s Supper could make them liable to misinterpretation.”
  - [3.2] “General Synod has been served by SCBP in matters of linguistic changes to the liturgical forms (see GS 2013 Art. 101). It would be advisable to ask the committee to study this and propose appropriate changes to the Lord’s Supper forms giving special attention to the personal nature of self-examination. In this process the churches would have opportunity to interact with any proposed changes.”

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 A general synod has the authority to issue a mandate to any duly appointed committee.
- 4.2 Kerwood (Grace) fails to prove that the content of the mandate itself is not in accordance with Scripture or the Church Order (see CO art. 31).

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- 4.3 The content in the appeal from Kerwood (Grace) is irrelevant to the mandate and assumes a particular outcome of the mandate.
- 4.4 If Kerwood (Grace) wishes to respond to the results of the mandated study, this can be done by sending a letter to interact with the SCBP report.

## 5. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To deny the appeal.

## ADOPTED

### Article 164 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 155: Pulpit Access

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal from Burlington (Fellowship) regarding GS 2022 art. 155 (8.6.3.1).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The appeal was declared admissible.

Grounds: It is appealing the decision of a previous general synod and it was received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 Burlington (Fellowship) introduces its appeal by stating that “by denying these appeals [in Art 155], GS Guelph (2022) has bound Fellowship Church beyond the plain reading of the CO. . .” (p. 1). Burlington (Fellowship) goes on to state that it “believes that there are certain axioms, or self-evident truths, which form the foundation for how the churches should understand and apply the Church Order. These are:
  - “Axiom 1. We affirm that the CO regulates matters that affect the churches in common.
  - Axiom 2. We affirm that the Word of God binds us and that we bind ourselves to the common consent given in CO 76.
  - Axiom 3. We affirm that the literal reading of the CO expresses the intent of the articles.
  - Axiom 4. We affirm that the articles are separated as individual articles for a reason” (p. 3).
- 3.2 Burlington (Fellowship) continues to introduce its appeal by discussing how the aforementioned axioms appear to be evidenced in a series of past general synod decisions (pp. 4–11).
- 3.3 In discussing the decision of GS 2022 (art. 155), Fellowship notes an “explicit argument made by RSE [2019] that GS made implicitly. RSE 2019 Article 11, in its Consideration 1, claimed that: ‘The central issue is “how to read and work with the CO.” The CO explicitly states matters and has principles at work.’ But these types of arguments have no basis. We do not bind ourselves to perceived principles or to implied intent but to the plain reading of the CO (Axiom 3)” (p. 9).

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3.4 GS 2004 observed that agreement was reached between the Church Order Subcommittee (CanRC) and their counterparts in the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) to “include an extensive introduction to the Church Order, which introduces: 1. Biblical and Confessional Basis, 2. Historical Background, 3. Foundational Principles, and 4. Broad Divisions” (GS 2004 art. 76 obs. 3.5). GS 2004 decided to charge the Subcommittee to “continue in the evaluation of the differences between the current church orders of the federations in the light of the scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Church Order of Dort” (GS 2004 art. 76 rec. 5.3.2.)

3.5 Burlington (Fellowship) appeals to GS 2025 to judge:

- 3.5.1 “that GS Guelph (2022) erred in Article 155 when it gave as Ground 4.2: ‘Our current practice that grants pulpit access has been determined collectively by the churches is based on synodical decisions as expressed in the rules for EF.’ The Synod failed to show that the rules for EF (CO 50) exclusively regulate whom the consistory may or may not invite to preach (CO 15) (Axiom 1);
- 3.5.2 that GS Guelph (2022) erred in Article 155 when it acknowledged in Ground 4.3 that ‘Our current CO does not have a specific provision regarding pulpit access for guest ministers from non-sister churches.’ Calling on ‘our current practice’ is not sufficient grounds to bind the local consistory (Axiom 2);
- 3.5.3 that GS Guelph (2022) erred in Article 155 when it ignored the literal reading of the CO 4 in favour of its perception of the CO’s intent or its determination of some underlying principle (Axiom 3);
- 3.5.4 that GS Guelph (2022) erred in Article 155 when it acknowledged that ‘Our current CO does not have a specific provision regarding pulpit access for guest ministers from non-sister churches’ and yet judged that if a local consistory wanted to regain its authority and responsibility over the local pulpit, it could always seek to have that freedom defined by proposing a change to the CO. GS Dunnville (2016) correctly judged that where there was no explicit regulation in the CO, the churches had the freedom and competence as well as the authority and responsibility to draft their own regulations (Axiom 1);
- 3.5.5 that GS Guelph (2022) erred in Article 155 when it judged in Article 48 in Grounds 4.1, ‘According to the CO, Classis has a role in giving advice concerning requests that have to do with temporary pulpit access’ and ruled that the appellants ignored ‘the relevant principle of classical involvement in granting access to the pulpit (e.g. CO Article 4.B.1 & 2) that can give guidance concerning the matter of giving pastors of non-sister churches temporary access to the pulpit.’ The Synod erred because it found its authority in what it determined to be a relevant principle and failed to show how the literal reading of CO Art 4 regulates whom the consistory may invite to preach (Axiom 3);
- 3.5.6 that GS Guelph (2022) erred in Article 155 when it gave as Grounds 4.1 that there are relevant principles in CO Articles 44 and 76 where the churches agree to honour the decisions of the major assemblies (Axiom 3). It did not demonstrate that the appellants were not honouring the decisions of the broader assemblies or

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that they were not observing the adopted order when, in fact, they acknowledged that no decision had been made (Axiom 1);

3.5.7 that GS Guelph (2022) erred in Article 155 because it failed to demonstrate how the regulation for eligibility for the call should be read into rules for EF regulated by Art 50 and thus, in some creative way, superseded CO 15, limiting the authority of the consistory has over the local pulpit. (Axiom 4)."

#### 4. Considerations

4.1 The core issue in the appeal of Burlington (Fellowship) is how one is to interpret the Church Order. On the one hand Burlington (Fellowship) objects to GS 2022's implicit use of the argument that there are principles at work behind what the Church Order explicitly states, and that such principles have to be borne in mind when understanding and applying the Church Order. On the other hand, Burlington (Fellowship) insists on a "plain reading" of the Church Order and then proceeds to state, elaborate on, and judge the decision of GS 2022 (art. 155) by means of four axioms drawn up by itself. These axioms are essentially four principles of how to interpret the Church Order. This is both ironic and an admission by Burlington (Fellowship) that there are inevitably some principles (stated or otherwise) that are at work whenever anyone interprets the Church Order. In principle, therefore, Burlington (Fellowship) cannot object to general synods using principles to interpret the Church Order since it does so itself. The issue comes down to: which principles of interpretation are deemed appropriate and acceptable by the churches? The proposed axioms of Burlington (Fellowship) have not been seen much less tested by the churches in the ecclesiastical way and thus the federation is not bound by these axioms. The entire federation, however, has agreed to a set of foundational principles which undergird the Church Order (see GS 2004 art. 76 obs. 4); further, the principles used by our ecclesiastical assemblies to understand and apply the Church Order have been seen in the acts of those assemblies, duly reviewed and even refined by the churches over many decades by way of appeals and overtures.

4.2 Burlington (Fellowship) finds fault with GS 2022 pointing to "Our current practice" as "not sufficient grounds to bind the local consistory" (GS 2022 art. 155 dec. 3.5.2). However, GS 2022 was not merely pointing to the historic practice of our churches but rather to the "synodical decisions as expressed in the rules for EF." In other words, the CanRC *practice* in question is the outworking of the *principles* which are given expression in various Church Order articles. The resulting practice is that the pool of ministers from which a consistory may invite a man to preach is established by the federation through its broader assemblies.

4.3 Burlington (Fellowship) finds fault with GS 2022 art. 155 gr. 4.2 for failing "to show that the rules for EF (CO 50) exclusively regulate whom the consistory may or may not invite to preach (CO 15) (Axiom 1)." Burlington (Fellowship) incorrectly refers to CO 15 as regulating whom a consistory may invite to preach. In reality, CO 15 is set in the context of regulations concerning a minister within our federation (Articles 4–21) and as such forbids a minister from taking it upon himself to preach (or administer the sacraments) in "another church" without the consent of that church's consistory. Further, GS 2022 did not need to show that the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) "exclusively" regulate whom the consistory may or may not invite to preach, but rather that said rules inherently restrict a consistory's choice of invitee to ministers from

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churches with whom we have EF. GS 2022 was correct that this is an implication of our (then) current rules for EF (CO 50) for if it was understood that local consistories could already invite any minister from any church they wished, there would be no need to have such a rule for the churches in common.

- 4.4 Burlington (Fellowship) faults the reasoning of GS 2022 art. 155 gr. 4.3 as being “not sufficient grounds to bind the local consistory.” However, ground 4.3 works together with ground 4.2 in which it is pointed out that rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) (CO 50) implicitly restrict a consistory’s choice of ministers to those churches with whom we have EF (see 4.3). This logical implication was a sufficient ground for the decision of GS 2022 to deny the appeals.
- 4.5 Burlington (Fellowship) faults GS 2022 for ignoring “the literal reading of the CO 4 in favour of its perception of the CO’s intent or its determination of some underlying principle (Axiom 3).” However, Burlington (Fellowship) does not show how GS 2022 does this. In fact, GS 2022 art. 155 gr. 4.1 simply communicates that there are principles of church governance at work throughout the Church Order (a truth our federation has long worked with as per observation 3.4 above), one of which is “classical involvement in granting access to the pulpit,” and then mentions the example of CO art 4.B.1. & 2. It would be inherently contradictory for the Church Order to carefully regulate access to the pulpit via classical examination in the case of students as well as in the case of ministers coming into the federation from a non-sister church (both in CO 4) and to also carefully develop rules for when pulpits may be open to ministers of churches we are developing ecclesiastical relationships with (via the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) per CO art. 50) to then leave it in the freedom of each local consistory to invite any minister from any church they wished. Logical consistency dictates that under our (then) current Church Order and adopted rules for EF, local consistories had bound themselves to wait until the churches together as a federation have chosen to regulate this matter differently.
- 4.6 Burlington (Fellowship) faults GS 2022 art. 155 gr. 4.4 for judging that a local church could seek to propose a change to the Church Order in order to make provision regarding pulpit access for guest ministers from non-sister churches, believing that local consistories have this freedom already because it is not explicitly regulated in the Church Order. However, when one factors in the principle of supervising access to the pulpits of the federation by the broader assemblies of the federation (classis and general synod, as per Considerations 4.3 and 4.5 above) as expressed in CO art. 4 and the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) adopted by general synod (per CO art. 50), then implicitly this matter is regulated by means of the Church Order and decisions of general synod. At the time of GS 2022, the churches had implicitly agreed that this matter rests with those broader assemblies, not the local consistory.
- 4.7 The fifth request of Burlington (Fellowship) for judgment is in substance much the same as the third request and has been answered in consideration 4.3 above.
- 4.8 Burlington (Fellowship) finds fault with the statement in GS 2022 art. 155 gr. 4.1 that “there are relevant principles in CO Art 44 and 76 where the churches agree to honour the decisions of the major assemblies,” when in fact the appellants acknowledged that no decision had been made. While the Church Order does not regulate every possible scenario, it applies principles to common situations of church governance. Such

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principles must be kept in mind when interpreting and applying the Church Order in uncommon or unusual situations. GS 2022 was correct to point out that the principles undergirding past decisions of a general synod regarding the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) (thus CO art. 44 and 50), coupled with the principle of classical involvement regarding in-coming ministers from non-sister churches (CO art. 4.B.2) have a bearing on how the matter of guest ministers from non-sister churches should be handled. The clear implication of these principles and regulations (current in 2022) is that this matter is to be handled by the broader assemblies and not independently by the local consistory.

- 4.9 Burlington (Fellowship) finds fault with GS 2022 art. 155 gr. 4.1 for “failing to demonstrate how the regulation for eligibility for the call [CO 4] should be read into the rules of EF by Art. 50 and thus, in some creative way, supersede CO 15.” However, GS 2022 did not “read” CO art. 4 “into” CO art. 50 but rather pointed to the underlying “principle of classical involvement in granting access to the pulpit” in CO art. 4 and lined that up with the “relevant principles” in CO art. 44 and the synodical decisions concerning Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF). This led GS 2022 art. 155 gr. 4.2 to state, “Our current practice that pulpit access has been determined collectively by the churches is based on synodical decisions as per CO 50.” It was legitimate for GS 2022 to reason on the basis of the principles underlying the Church Order as they are given expression in the given articles.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To deny the appeal.

## ADOPTED

J. Torenvliet, H. Jagersma, J. Jager, M. Jagt, G. Boot, and R. Bremer abstained as per CO art. 32.

### Article 165 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 155: Pulpit Access

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a report on an appeal by the Ottawa (Jubilee) CanRC against GS 2022 art. 155. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

### Article 166 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 155: Pulpit Access

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal from Coaldale (8.6.3.2).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The appeal was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was submitted before the deadline and is against a decision of a previous general synod.

### 3. Observations

3.1 The Coaldale CanRC supports the decision of GS 2022 found in art.155 but appeals the validity of art. 155 gr. 4.4 which reads:

[4.4] Re 3.2: Our current church order does not have a specific provision regarding pulpit access for guest ministers from non-sister churches. Toronto-Bethel acknowledges this in Consideration 6, speaking of this as a “gap.” At the same time, it argues in Consideration 7 that the onus for closing that “gap” lies with those who desire to ensure that present practice is codified. The other appellants make similar statements about where the onus lies, while RSE 2019 in turn places the onus on those who wish to change current practices. In line with the practices of our sister-churches (see 4.3 above), the churches could decide to adopt an article or provision in the church order specifically regulating local pulpit access. In this way our practices will explicitly reflect our church order.

3.2 Coaldale provides four grounds for their appeal

- 3.2.1 When GS 2022 writes, “In line with the practices of our sister-churches (see 4.3 above), the churches could decide to adopt an article or provision in the church order specifically regulating local pulpit access”, it effectively is giving advice where none is sought.
- 3.2.2 It understands the phrase, “In this way our practices will explicitly reflect our church order” to be saying that our practices determine our church order rather than our church order determining our practices.
- 3.2.3 It considers that Synod’s even making the suggestion that churches could adopt an article or provision in the church order regulating local pulpit access undermines the grounds articulated in GS 2022 Art.155 dec. 4.1 and 4.2.
- 3.2.4 It believes that rather than we conforming to how other federations “apply the first mark of the true church (Belgic Confession Art.29),” we need to be influencing these other federations.

### 4. Considerations

4.1 Re 3.2.1: Coaldale argues that GS 2022 gave advice where none was sought. However, the contested remark in GS 2022 art. 155 dec. 4.4 (“the churches could decide...”) was not unsolicited guidance but an observation arising directly from the appeals placed before GS 2022. GS 2022 was responding to the appellants themselves, who had identified a “gap” in the Church Order and proposed contrasting ways of addressing it. GS 2022 did not initiate this subject independently; it responded to what was properly before it. Therefore, the reference to a potential Church Order provision was procedurally legitimate and does not violate CO art. 30.

4.2 Re 3.2.2: Coaldale reads the phrase “in this way our practices will explicitly reflect our church order” as if it reverses the normative relationship between Church Order and practice. This is a misreading. GS 2022 did not say that practice should *determine* the Church Order, but that a Church Order provision could *clarify* and formalize the basis for current practice. The statement assumes that Church Order should govern our practices and suggests a path to bring greater consistency (see CO art. 76).

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- 4.3 Re 3.2.3: The suggestion of GS 2022 that the churches could adopt an article or provision in the Church Order regulating local pulpit access is in keeping with CO art. 76, that if the interest of the churches demand such, these articles can be “changed, augmented or diminished.”
- 4.4 Re 3.2.4: The blessing of enjoying Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with other federations is that there can be a mutual influencing of each other, not simply one influencing the other.

## 5. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To deny the appeal.

## ADOPTED

G. Boot abstained as per CO art. 32.

## Article 167 – CNST (Needy Students of Theology)

### 1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Needy Student Fund (CNSF) (8.2.4).
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Fergus North (8.3.4.1), Willoughby Heights (8.3.4.2).

### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.  
Ground: It was mandated by GS 2022 and received on time.
- 2.2 The letters regarding the report were declared admissible.  
Ground: These letters interact with a report to GS 2025 and were received on time.

### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 157) mandated the CNSF:
  - [3.9.1] To assess the churches annually as per the number of communicant members in the current Yearbook based on the anticipated funding for the new year ahead;
  - [3.9.2] To report annually to each church of the federation on its activities, and to report triennially to each general synod on the same and to include appropriate recommendations in its report to general synod.Further, GS 2022 instructed the CNSF:
  - [3.7] To provide GS 2025 with recommendations, supported by clear grounds, for any changes to the bylaws of the CNSF, which must be made in order to be in compliance with the ITA and the CRA, as well as with CO Art. 20 & 75.
- 3.2 From the CNSF report, the following:
  - 3.2.1 The report covers the period 2021-2023.

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- 3.2.2 The committee financially supported a total of 12 students, with a total of \$293,249 being disbursed for costs relative to student grants and administrative costs.
- 3.2.3 This total represents an increase of \$161,033 from the previous three years (\$132,216 for 2018-2020), due to a higher number of students, students with larger families, and higher living costs in Ontario.
- 3.2.4 At the end of 2020 / early 2021, after the fund supported fewer students than anticipated, \$40,000 from the fund was invested with Christian Stewardship Services (CSS) to accrue interest on the surplus amounts in the fund. This investment was withdrawn in early 2023 when the fund did not have sufficient funds in the chequing account to cover expenses during the period when assessment cheques were coming in from the churches. Since the withdrawal, the funds have again grown and the investment was replenished back to an appropriate balance with CSS, and more recently, has increased the funds in CSS because the transfer of funds between the chequing account and CSS is quick and efficient.
- 3.2.5 The committee endeavours to maintain an account surplus to address emergent or unexpected expenditures from students, while keeping all funds in either a chequing account with the Meridian Credit Union or an investment account with CSS. Fiscal accountability is maintained by means of dual signatories, and audits are performed on annual year-end financial statements and reported by the committee to the Council of the Grassie (Covenant) CanRC.
- 3.2.6 The churches continued to be assessed annually based on projected enrollment and anticipated expenditures, according to the agreed upon formula in the committee's mandate. This upcoming year, the rate is expected to be \$7-8 per communicant member; to avoid large swings up and down in the rate, the committee is attempting to keep a more even rate. With thankfulness, the churches have been able to meet their financial assessments during this triennial period.
- 3.2.7 A defined process is in place for students who are eligible for financial assistance to follow; after securing appropriate forms and contact information for the CNSF, they submit a request for financial aid, visits are conducted to ensure that aid is given in a spirit of humility and brotherly love. The Committee reports that, with thankfulness, there has been good cooperation and harmony between students and members of the CNSF.
- 3.2.8 In response to GS 2022 [3.7], the Committee asked Teresa Douma of *Douma Law* to review the bylaws of the CNSF and determine if the CNSF is in compliance with the Income Tax Act (ITA) and the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), and CO Article 20 & 75. The lawyer's opinion is documented in a letter dated September 30, 2024, to Grassie (Covenant) CanRC and reviewed by Rev. John Louwerse and Dr. William den Hollander.

Conclusions of this review can be summarized:

- 3.2.8.1 For purposes of complying with the Income Tax Act and charity law in general, in accepting the responsibility and role as the Committee for Needy Theological Students, the Church had/has to ensure that this activity falls under the umbrella of its purposes and that it has sufficient direction and

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control over it, so as to be able to say the activity is its own activity. The Church annually demonstrates appropriateness of disbursements through its financial reporting to the churches of the federation, its ‘audit’ and the annual Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) T3010 filing.

- 3.2.8.2 Based on a plain reading of the Church Order it is not clear on what grounds the current manner in which the Church operates the CNSF would bring it into non-compliance with Church Order Articles 20 or 75.
- 3.2.9 With thanks for God’s providing hand, the CNSF continues to be blessed with the requisite financial means to support students preparing for ministry in our Lord’s church.
- 3.3 The Fergus North CanRC expresses concern that if the CNSF records are audited by a government agency or reviewed in court, a “plain reading” of the Church Order may not be taken, and instead a more in-depth review may be used and could potentially expose some legal issues. Fergus North requests synod to mandate the CNSF to follow up on the legal review to determine if the Church Order should be updated based on the observations in the legal review.
- 3.4 The Willoughby Heights CanRC expresses ongoing concerns with the Needy Students’ Fund (CNSF) reporting and structure.
  - 3.4.1 Willoughby Heights expresses appreciation for the work done but reiterates concerns raised in letters to GS 2019 and GS 2022, which they believe remain unresolved.
    - 3.4.1.1 *Terminological Confusion (CNST vs. CNSF):*
      - 3.4.1.1.1 Historically, synods have used inconsistent terminology for the committee tasked with managing support for needy theological students.
      - 3.4.1.1.2 The Committee for Needy Students of Theology (CNST) is appointed by a general synod.
      - 3.4.1.1.3 The CNST, in turn, appoints the CNSF (the fund management team).
      - 3.4.1.1.4 This distinction has been blurred in reports and decisions (e.g., GS 2016, GS 2019, GS 2022), causing administrative and ecclesiastical confusion.
    - 3.4.1.2 *Ownership of Activity and Compliance with Church Order:*
      - 3.4.1.2.1 According to Church Order Article 20, the churches must provide financial aid to needy theological students.
        - This is currently done via a committee appointed by general synod.
        - This committee is given control over its own money flow.
        - This committee is a church which has charitable status.
      - 3.4.1.2.2 Willoughby Heights argues that, if having charitable status implies having “direction and control” over funds, a church appointed as a committee in control of its own money is in contravention of CO Art. 74 (no lording it over others) and 75 (church property in common).
        - Re CO art. 75: “All property … which belongs to the churches comprised in … general synods … in common, shall be held in trust …

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by deputies or trustees ... and such trustees shall be bound by the terms of their ... instruction." Willoughby Heights believes this to imply that "direction and control" is never in the hands of the deputies (=committee) but always remains in the hands of general synods.

- Re CO art. 74: "No church shall in any way lord it over other churches." Willoughby Heights believes that if a single church has "direction and control" over property of the churches in common, that church is lording it over other churches.

#### 3.4.1.3 *Implications for other Synod-Appointed Churches:*

- 3.4.1.3.1 If GS 2025 accepts Grassie's claim of legal ownership as a model, it sets a precedent affecting other churches tasked with Synodical mandates (e.g., Guelph-Emmanuel for the Pastoral Training Program, Carman-East for the General Fund).
- 3.4.1.3.2 This could undermine ecclesiastical principles of shared responsibility and compliance with the Church Order.

#### 3.4.2 Willoughby Heights requests synod to:

- 3.4.2.1 Insist on precise use of terminology as acknowledged by GS 2019;
- 3.4.2.2 Clarify and ensure proper ecclesiastical ownership of synodical activities;
- 3.4.2.3 Protect the federation's integrity by ensuring all synod-appointed churches comply with Church Order principles.

### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Committee for Needy Students of Theology (CNST) has faithfully completed its mandate.
- 4.2 For the period 2021-2023:
  - 4.2.1 The CNST diligently assessed the churches on an annual basis and distributed funds to theological students in need with care.
  - 4.2.2 As good stewards, the CNST managed their funds wisely, including the investment of funds to generate interest on surplus amounts not needed in the operating fund at that particular time.
  - 4.2.3 The CNST provided annual financial statements and reported to the Council of Grassie (Covenant) for their oversight.
  - 4.2.4 The committee fulfilled its mandate (GS 2022 art. 157 dec.3.7) with a legal review as a first step to provide GS 2025 with recommendations concerning ITA and CO art. 20 & 75.
- 4.3 Fergus North and Willoughby Heights rightly point out that a more in-depth review still needs to be done to determine if our current structures and practices for funding needy students of theology are in compliance with Canadian tax law and CO art. 20, 74 & 75.
  - 4.3.1 Fergus North requests Synod to mandate the committee to follow up with a more in-depth review to determine if the Church Order needs to be updated based on the observations in the legal review.
  - 4.3.2 Willoughby Heights requests Synod to appoint a study committee to research its concerns and to report to the next general synod whether their concerns are

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founded and, if they are, how they might best be resolved. Willoughby Heights also requests that this committee consist of at least three individuals with expertise in accounting practices, Canadian tax law, and CanRC church policy, and that all members of this study committee have experience in the practice of our church government.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To thank the Grassie (Covenant) CanRC for their work as Committee for Needy Students of Theology (CNST);
- 5.2 To discharge the CNST for the duties completed during the period 2021-2023;
- 5.3 To reappoint the Grassie (Covenant) CanRC as the CNST to look after extending financial aid to those students of theology who are in need of it;
- 5.4 To mandate the Committee for Needy Students of Theology (CNST):
  - 5.4.1 To assess the churches annually as per the number of communicant members in the current *Yearbook* based on the anticipated funding required for the new year ahead;
  - 5.4.2 To collect and distribute the funds for the Bursary Proposal of the CRTS (cf. GS 2025 art. 154 rec. 5.14);
  - 5.4.3 To submit its report on its activities to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.
- 5.5 To appoint a study committee of at least three members as per consideration 4.3.2 and give this committee the following mandate:
  - 5.5.1 To investigate whether there are conflicts between the Canadian Tax Law and CanRC governance structures and practices (including but not limited to the Church Order, Committee for Needy Students of Theology (CNST) bylaws, and general synod decisions regarding CNST) as per the concerns raised with respect to the function of CO art. 20, 74, & 75, using resources such as Canadian Centre for Christian Charities (cccc.org);
  - 5.5.2 To recommend how any detected conflicts might best be resolved;
  - 5.5.3 To advise whether their conclusions with respect to the CNST also apply to other general synod appointed committees that consist of individual churches (CPTPF, General Fund);
  - 5.5.4 To submit its report to the churches no later than six (6) months prior the convening of the next general synod.

**ADOPTED**

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**Article 168 – Audit / Review****1. Material**

- 1.1 Letter from Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) (8.2.2.1)

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The letter was declared admissible

Grounds: The letter pertains to reports submitted to GS 2025 and was received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) expresses concern about the use of the term “audit” in several reports to GS 2025.
- 3.2 The submission notes that some committees describe financial reviews as “audits” or refer to reviewers as “auditors,” although no audit was conducted according to professional or legal standards.
- 3.3 Examples cited include:
  - The Committee for Needy Students’ Fund Report (top of p. 4 and p. 15);
  - The Guelph-Emmanuel Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee Report (top of p. 2).
- 3.4 The letter contrasts this with the Board of Governors of the Seminary, which uses the term “audit” properly and provides supporting documentation (pp. 7, 27, 28 of its report).
- 3.5 Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) urges synod to instruct reporting committees to use financial terminology that accurately reflects the nature of the review performed.

**4. Considerations**

- 4.1 The term “audit” carries specific professional and legal meaning. Using it for informal or non-professional financial reviews risks confusion and may create inappropriate expectations about the level of scrutiny applied.

**5. Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To acknowledge as legitimate the concern of Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) regarding the imprecise use of the term audit in some reports.
- 5.2 To instruct all committees and reporting bodies to use terminology in financial reporting that accurately reflects the procedures performed. The term “audit” should be used only when a professional audit has been conducted. Other forms of review should be described using terms such as “examination,” “inspection,” or “review,” as appropriate.

**ADOPTED**

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**Article 169 – Closing Devotions**

The Chairman made some housekeeping announcements regarding the sprint to the finish line.

Rev. Rolf den Hollander read Psalm 19:5,6, spoke some devotional words, read Psalm 19:7-14, led in prayer, and had the meeting sing Psalm 19:1,2.

*Synod was adjourned until 9:00am for committee work and nightly rest.*

**Day 10 — Morning Session****Friday, May 16, 2025****Article 170 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman read Psalm 134, spoke some devotional words, led in opening prayer, and had the meeting sing Psalm 134. After observing that all synod members were present, he went on to make some housekeeping announcements in light of the synod's close coming into view.

**Article 171 – Acts**

The prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

**Article 172 – GGRI – Letter of Greetings**

Rev. Karlo Janssen read a letter of greeting sent by the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI), declaring gratitude for our relationship and expressing regret at being unable to attend Synod in person. The full text of the letter can be found in Appendix 19. The Chairman spoke some words in response.

**Article 173 – SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section One, Part 6 (Expansion Book of Praise)**

Committee 1 presented draft 1 of a report on the report of the SCBP regarding expansion of the *Book of Praise* with alternate renderings of the Psalms and additional hymns. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 174 – SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section One, Parts 1,2,3 (Shorter LS Forms)**

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on the report of the SCBP regarding shorter Forms for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further consideration.

**Article 175 – Overture RSW 2024: Infant Baptism Form****1. Material**

- 1.1 Overture from RSW 2024 (proposed originally by Aldergrove, and submitted via CPE) (8.4.3.4).

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1.2 Letters from the following churches: Arthur (8.5.9.1), Attercliffe (8.5.9.2), Barrhead (8.5.9.3), Calgary (8.5.9.4), Carman East (8.5.9.5), Coaldale (8.5.9.6), Dunnville West (8.5.9.7), Edmonton (Providence) (8.5.9.8), Fergus (Maranatha) (8.5.9.9), Flamborough (Redemption) (8.5.9.10), Houston (8.5.9.11), Kerwood (Grace) (8.5.9.12), Langley (8.5.9.13), Neerlandia (8.5.9.14), Niagara South (8.5.9.15), Ottawa (Jubilee) (8.5.9.16), St. Albert (8.5.9.17), Tintern Spring Creek (8.5.9.18), Willoughby Heights (8.5.9.19).

## 2. Admissibility

2.1 The overture was declared admissible

Grounds: It was submitted on time and is placed on the agenda of GS 2025 by a regional synod.

2.2. The letters from the churches were declared admissible.

Grounds: They were submitted in time and interact with an overture to GS 2025.

## 3. Observations

3.1 The overture originates from the Aldergrove CanRC, submitted via Classis Pacific East to RSW 2024, and forwarded with recommendations by RSW 2024 to GS 2025.

3.2 The overture proposes a revision to the Form for the Baptism of Infants, citing several concerns with the existing form as currently found in the *Book of Praise*:

3.2.1 Many of the sentences are long and contain multiple clauses.

3.2.2 The Form is too lengthy, particularly in the case of churches where many baptisms take place annually.

3.2.3 The language of the Form is overly formal and does not sound like anything else spoken in the worship service.

3.2.4 There is in some cases a lack of clarity, a problem with the logical flow or a clumsiness from offering a series of Scripture quotations.

3.2.5 There are some phrases and sentences which could communicate incorrect ideas.

3.2.6 The prayer before baptism is awkward as a way of addressing God.

3.2.7 Other churches with whom we have fellowship have revised our form in use.

3.3 RSW 2024 in their recommendations to GS 2025 recommend appointing a committee for the purpose of proposing to the churches a revised Form for the Baptism of Infants.

3.4 From the correspondence, the following:

3.4.1 Arthur opposes the overture indicating that they had seven baptisms and the previous two years they had around fourteen baptisms per year. Not once during this time did a member of the congregation make any mention of the form being “not conducive to public reading”, or “stilted” or anything alike. They also find that the reasons given in the overture are subjective in nature.

3.4.2 Most of the churches who responded to this overture were opposed to the adoption of this proposed new Baptism Form. Some of the churches opposed wrote that if a new form was to be considered, it should be a product of the work of a committee. Only a few churches wrote in favour of the proposed revision of the form.

3.4.3 Some churches point out the importance of maintaining the historic language of the Form, which connects us to the catholicity of the Church through time.

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3.5 The overture includes a proposed revised text for the Form for the Baptism of Infants and indicates the possibility of a separate proposal for a shorter form in the future.

#### 4. Considerations

4.1 Synod notes the concerns raised by Aldergrove (via CPE and RSW) regarding the existing Form for the Baptism of Infants. Some of the concerns regarding sentence structure, clarity, and potentially outdated language appear to have merit and warrant careful consideration.

4.2 While the original Aldergrove overture already provides a proposed revised text, the process for revising Liturgical Forms within our federation has historically involved careful study and deliberation by a committee mandated by a general synod, followed by review and feedback from the churches. This process ensures that any changes reflect the collective wisdom and consensus of the churches and are faithful to Scripture and the Confessions.

4.3 The concerns raised in the overture regarding language, clarity, and length would certainly apply to the Form for the Baptism of Adults as well, given its similar structure and wording in many parts. A review should therefore encompass both forms.

4.4 Given that Liturgical Forms are interconnected and may reference or allude to one another, any proposed changes to the Baptism Forms should be reviewed for their potential impact on other liturgical forms (e.g., the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, which sometimes alludes to the promises made in baptism).

4.5 Appointing a dedicated committee, as recommended by RSW 2024 and supported by various churches, would provide the necessary time and expertise for a thorough review of the Forms for Infant and Adult Baptism, allowing for careful analysis of the existing text, evaluation of the overture's suggestions and input from the churches, and the development of a proposed revised text.

4.6 Such a committee should be comprised of individuals with sensitivity to pastoral needs, expertise in biblical languages, theology, church history (particularly concerning the development of the baptism forms), and the use of the English language in worship.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

5.1 To thank the Aldergrove CanRC, Classis Pacific East, and Regional Synod West 2024 for the work done in studying and proposing possible improvements to the Form for the Baptism of Infants and proposing a way forward towards defining and implementing these improvements;

5.2 To appoint a three-person committee to review the existing Forms for the Baptism of Infants and Adults as found in the *Book of Praise*. This committee should be comprised of individuals with sensitivity to pastoral needs, expertise in biblical languages, theology, church history (particularly concerning the development of the Baptism Forms), and the use of the English language in worship;

5.3 To mandate the committee to:

5.3.1 Study the Forms for the Baptism of Infants and Adults in light of the concerns raised in the overture and any other input from the churches regarding clarity,

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language, length, and logical flow, while ensuring faithfulness to Scripture and the Confessions;

5.3.2 Consider the relationship between the Baptism Forms and other liturgical forms, particularly the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's supper, and assess any potential impact of proposed revisions;

5.3.3 Propose revisions to the text of the Forms for the Baptism of Infants and Adults;

5.3.4 Submit a first draft to the churches for feedback to the committee, no less than 15 months before the next general synod;

5.3.5 Submit its report and proposed revised text to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the next general synod.

(See further GS 2025 art. 183)

## ADOPTED

### Article 176 – Overture RSW 2024: CO art. 30 (*Ecclesiastical Route*)

#### 1. Material

1.1 Overture RSW 2024 Overture re CO art. 30 (8.4.3.1).

1.2 Letters from the following churches: Arthur (8.5.3.1), Barrhead (8.5.3.2), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) (8.5.3.3), Caledonia (8.5.3.4), Calgary (8.5.3.5), Carman East (8.5.3.6), Carman West (8.5.3.7), Dunnville West (8.5.3.8), Elm Creek (8.5.3.9), Elora (8.5.3.10), Fergus (Maranatha) (8.5.3.11), Flamborough (Redemption) (8.5.3.12), Grand Rapids (8.5.3.13), Grand Valley (8.5.3.14), Grassie (Covenant) (8.5.3.15), Houston (8.5.3.16), Lincoln (Vineyard) (8.5.3.17), Neerlandia (8.5.3.18), Niagara South (8.5.3.19), St. Albert (8.5.3.20), Toronto (Bethel) (8.5.3.21), Willoughby Heights (8.5.3.22).

#### 2. Admissibility

2.1 The overture was declared admissible.

Grounds: It followed the very ecclesiastical route it is trying to change and was received on time.

2.2 The letters were declared admissible.

Grounds: The letters interact with an overture to GS 2025 and were received on time.

#### 3. Observations

3.1 From the overture:

3.1.1 Timeline of changes to CO Art 30, and guidelines:

3.1.1.1 GS 1983 added to CO Article 30 the following, "A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it." This now caused the ecclesiastical route to apply to new matters.

3.1.1.2 GS 2010 added the following to the general synod guidelines: "For **all** [emphasis added] matters of the churches in common, individual churches

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may address proposals or other significant submissions directly to general synod with the requirement that all such submissions are sent also to each church in the federation no later than six months prior to general synod" (GS 2010 Art. 62).

- 3.1.1.3 GS 2013 rescinded the previous general synod guidelines as they were at odds with CO Art 30. Instead, it adopted the following guideline, "Since matters on the agenda of general synod involve the churches in common, regional synods shall distribute copies of adopted overture to all the churches in the federation no later than five months prior to the convening of a general synod" (GS 2013 Art 99).
- 3.1.2 Two competing interpretations of CO Art. 30 have existed in the churches. The "older view" is that churches may submit overtures directly to general synod if the matter is common to all churches. The "newer view" requires all overtures first be processed through the ecclesiastical route, regardless of their nature. GS 2010 attempted to blend these views by allowing direct submissions with safeguards (e.g., six-month notice), but GS 2013 rejected this compromise, reinforcing the newer, stricter interpretation.
- 3.1.3 There have been inconsistencies in the application and interpretation of the ecclesiastical route since the addition of the relevant sentence to CO Art. 30 in 1983. For example, GS 2007 admitted an overture directly from a church, bypassing the ecclesiastical route, on the grounds that it dealt with a matter common to the churches. This resulted in a back-and-forth as synods created a "battle of opinions" (GS 2010 art. 62 cons. 3.4), which GS 2010 itself described as "extremely unhelpful in establishing equity and fairness among the churches."
- 3.1.4 Despite the formal requirement of the ecclesiastical route, synods have not always enforced it consistently. Some overtures that bypassed the route were accepted. Others that followed the route were rejected for procedural or substantive reasons. This inconsistency has led to confusion among the churches about what is required for an overture to be considered admissible.
- 3.1.5 The inconsistency undermines trust in the fairness and transparency of synodical processes. Churches are left uncertain about how to proceed with overtures, leading to frustration and inefficiency. This confusion is not merely theoretical—it has had real consequences in recent synods (e.g., GS 2016, GS 2019, GS 2022), where overtures were inconsistently handled despite following the prescribed route.
- 3.1.6 While this process is intended to involve the churches and ensure broad support it often fails to achieve either. For example, GS 2022 rejected an overture that had been approved by both regional synods (GS 2022 art. 105), showing that even when an overture has passed through all the prescribed steps and *appears* to have broad support, it can still be denied at the final stage. Two reasons might explain this:
  - 3.1.6.1 Each assembly is a deliberative body that makes its own decision. An overture does not gain legitimacy simply by passing through multiple stages, but by the strength of the arguments presented.

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- 3.1.6.2 Churches might not engage early in the process for a variety of reasons. Some churches only respond to overtures once they reach general synod, even if they had opportunities to do so earlier at classis or regional synod, showing that the overture may not have broad support.
- 3.1.7 The ecclesiastical route can undermine fairness when a classis or regional synod can prevent an overture from reaching general synod, even if the matter is of concern to churches outside their jurisdiction. This creates a situation where churches are subject to decisions made by assemblies they do not belong to.
- 3.1.8 Appeals complicate the process. If an overture is denied, a church can appeal the decision. If that appeal is upheld, the overture may still reach general synod—but now through a more convoluted and delayed process.
- 3.1.9 When considering the efficiency of handling overtures, from the perspective of an individual church, the existing process is not always efficient as many churches will need to deal with the same matter multiple times as it moves through the assemblies to which it belongs, even if it fails along the way. Considering the number of overtures that are denied at regional and general synods, classes and regional synods may not be efficient at filtering out weak overtures, which are then dealt with by assemblies, and churches responding to them.

- 3.2 RSW 2024 requests that synod:
  - 3.2.1 Change CO art. 30 to read: “A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly and is common to its churches may be put on the agenda by one of its churches.”;
  - 3.2.2 Remove synod guideline I.F;
  - 3.2.3 Adopt a new guideline that reads, “For new matters common to the churches of the general synod, individual churches may address overtures directly to general synod with the requirement that all such submissions are sent also to each church in the federation no later than six months prior to general synod.”
- 3.3 From the churches:
  - 3.3.1 The current process ensures that only overtures which have won the support of many churches reaches the broadest assembly (Arthur, Fergus (Maranatha), Grand Rapids, Neerlandia, Niagara South).
  - 3.3.2 Failures to apply CO art. 30 properly in the past does not imply a need to change the CO today (Arthur, Houston, Lincoln (Vineyard)).
  - 3.3.3 The overture will increase the workload of our general synods (Arthur, Barrhead, Carman West, Dunville West, Elora, Grand Valley, Grassie (Covenant), Lincoln (Vineyard), Niagara South, Toronto (Bethel)).
  - 3.3.4 The current process allows minor assemblies to filter out weak overtures (Barrhead, Calgary, Fergus (Maranatha), Lincoln (Vineyard), Niagara South).
  - 3.3.5 Relying on the wisdom of minor assemblies is a benefit (Barrhead, Calgary, Dunville West, Elm Creek, Fergus (Maranatha), Grand Valley, Neerlandia, St. Albert, Toronto (Bethel)).
  - 3.3.6 If a request to forward an overture has been denied, and an appeal sustained by general synod, the overture can be submitted directly to general synod (Calgary).

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- 3.3.7 The current process provides more checks and balances (Carman East, Niagara South).
- 3.3.8 The current process is cumbersome, complicated, and frustrating (Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth), Willoughby Heights).
- 3.3.9 The current process results in altered and adulterated overtures landing on the table of General Synod (Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth)).
- 3.3.10 Each church should have a direct voice in matters of concern and interest to it (Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth)).

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The historical development of CO art. 30 and its associated guidelines (obs. 3.1.1 above) indicates that the current formulation is not foundational but open to reconsideration.
- 4.2 The existence of two competing interpretations of CO art. 30 (obs. 3.1.2 above)—the “older view” allowing direct submissions and the “newer view” requiring the ecclesiastical route—demonstrates a lack of consensus historically. GS 2010 attempted to reconcile these views, but GS 2013 reversed that effort as it was in conflict with the Church Order. The ongoing tension suggests the need to either fix the current process or change the church order.
  - 4.2.1 The process involves all the broader assemblies, their regulations and guidelines. It is beyond the ambit of general synod to dictate how the minor assemblies regulate themselves.
  - 4.2.2 A general synod may rightfully change the Church Order if the interest of the churches demand it (CO art. 76).
- 4.3 The inconsistency in how general synods have applied the ecclesiastical route (obs. 3.1.3–3.1.5 above) has led to confusion and potentially undermines trust in the process. A Church Order provision that is not applied consistently fails to serve its intended purpose and should be reconsidered.
  - 4.3.1 At GS 2025 two virtually identical overtures were received from RSE 2024 (agenda items 8.4.2.4 & 8.2.4.5) and another virtually identical overture was denied by RSW 2024. This suggests that the originating church believed that by sharing the overture with multiple churches in other classes that it would increase the likelihood that the matter would land on the agenda of general synod.
- 4.4 The ecclesiastical route does not reliably ensure church involvement or support (obs. 3.1.6 & 3.3.1 above). The overture correctly points out, “since broader assemblies are assemblies of churches, churches should be aware of proposals being considered by the broader assemblies to which they belong and should have the opportunity to present their considerations on those proposals to the major assembly considering the proposal.”
- 4.5 The language of “lording it over” is an overstatement. Nevertheless, when a classis or regional synod blocks an overture from reaching general synod, it does indirectly affect churches outside their jurisdiction (obs. 3.1.7 above). In practice, this is minimal given the frequency with which churches communicate with each other on these matters. Further, these matters may end up on the agenda of a broader assembly by way of appeal (cf. obs. 3.3.6 above).

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- 4.6 The appeals process (obs. 3.1.8 above) reveals an inherent inconsistency with the current process. When an appeal against a decision not to adopt a particular overture is sustained, it raises the question of what to do with the overture.
  - 4.6.1 If the overture is to go, for example, to the next general synod (obs. 3.3.6 above), then it must do so in violation of the guideline as a *church* is putting a new matter on the agenda of a general synod and not the minor assembly.
  - 4.6.2 If the overture is to go to the assembly that denied the overture, it would violate the Church Order as a major assembly cannot set the agenda of a minor assembly (CO art 30).
  - 4.6.3 Requiring the overture to go back through the ecclesiastical route, that is resubmitting it to classis, would be frustrating and burdensome.
- 4.7 The arguments of efficiency and workload (obs. 3.1.9 & 3.3.3 above) are not definitive and somewhat subjective. It depends greatly on whether one is looking at all the churches or general synod alone.
  - 4.7.1 Multiple churches argue (obs. 3.3.4 above) that the current process allows weak overtures to be filtered out before reaching general synod. The overture demonstrates that the “pass rate” of the broader minor assemblies does not bear this out (obs. 3.1.9 above).
- 4.8 The overture’s proposed changes (obs. 3.2 above) aim to address these issues by allowing churches to submit overtures directly to general synod, provided all churches are notified 6 months in advance. Since the churches normally receive many synod reports 6 months in advance, it would be better to have overtures submitted 12 months in advance.
  - 4.8.1 To ensure that general synods are not overloaded with weak overtures and to benefit from the wisdom of minor assemblies, churches could seek the judgement and help of classis (as per CO art. 44) in preparing overtures (obs. 3.3.5 above).
- 4.9 Another way to address the practical issues (obs. 3.3.2 above), would be to change the regulations of the broader minor assemblies such that they filter weak overtures more efficiently (obs. 3.3.4 above). Doing so is outside the ambit of general synod (CO art. 30).

## 5. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To adopt the overture;
- 5.2 To change the last line of CO art. 30 from:

*A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.”*

To:

*A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly and is common to its churches may be put on the agenda by one of its churches.*

- 5.3 To remove the current Guideline 1.F from the Guidelines for Synod;
- 5.4 To add to the Guidelines for Synod the following new Guideline 1.F:

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*For matters common to the churches of the general synod, whether “new” (CO article 30) or “once decided upon” (CO article 33), individual churches may address proposals directly to general synod with the requirement that all such submissions are sent also to each church in the federation no later than twelve (12) months prior to general synod.*

## ADOPTED

*For the Guidelines as revised by GS 2025, see Appendix 25.*

### **Article 177 – PCA (Presbyterian Church in America)**

#### **1. Material**

1.1 Letter from Guelph (Emmanuel) (8.3.10.11).

#### **2. Admissibility**

2.1 The letter was declared admissible.

Grounds: It was received on time and the letter pertains to the CER report to GS 2025.

#### **3. Observations**

3.1 In its letter, the Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC:

3.1.1 Expresses surprise that the CER has no contact with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA);

3.1.2 Notes that Hamilton (Cornerstone) and Flamborough (Redemption) brought this to the attention of GS 2013 and GS 2019 respectively;

3.1.3 Requests GS 2025 mandate the CER to take up contact with the PCA.

#### **4. Considerations**

4.1 A similar request was made by Hamilton (Cornerstone) to GS 2013 (art. 81), and the consideration of GS 2013 stated:

While Hamilton-Cornerstone’s suggestion may have merit, it would be appropriate and also helpful for Hamilton (or some other congregation so inclined) to first investigate the PCA further. If after investigation and evaluation of the PCA there is an apparent potential for fruitful ecclesiastical contact, the issue should be brought from the minor assemblies to the broader, where it may be placed on the agenda of the CCCNA for its attention. This course of action would be similar to that taken, e.g., by the church of Aldergrove with respect to the Free Reformed Churches of North America (see Acts of Synod Fergus 1998, Article 98, Consideration III.A).

4.2 GS 2025 has changed CO art. 30 to read, “A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly and is common to its churches may be put on the agenda by one of its churches.” It is no longer required to bring the matter through the minor broader assemblies in order to put it on the agenda a general synod.

4.3 It remains incumbent on the local church to do an investigation and evaluation of any other church before approaching general synod.

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**5. Recommendation**

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 That the above consideration serves as answer to the Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC.

**ADOPTED****Article 178 – Appeal against GS 2022 art. 155: Pulpit Access****1. Material**

- 1.1 Appeal from Ottawa (Jubilee) (8.6.3.3).

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The appeal was declared admissible.

Grounds: It is an appeal against a decision of GS 2022, and it was received on time.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 The Ottawa (Jubilee) CanRC states at the outset of its appeal that it is committed “to a literal interpretation of the Church Order and our responsibility to oversee our congregation’s practices not expressly regulated by it.” It then articulates the following four points:

- 3.1.1 “We did not agree to bind ourselves to follow the traditions of men or to uphold the common practices of a plurality of churches. (See Belgic Confession Art 7.)
  - 3.1.2 We gave our “yes” only to a literal reading of the church order.
  - 3.1.3 We use the articles within the church order as individual articles. We do not seek to interpret or read into an article what is already regulated by another article.
  - 3.1.4 We take full responsibility to oversee our congregation’s local practices for anything not expressly regulated in the church order.”

- 3.2 Ottawa (Jubilee) appeals GS 2025 to judge that GS 2022 (art. 155) erred by combining three separate appeals regarding RSE 2019 art. 11 into one judgement, “thereby failing to consider Ottawa-Jubilee’s unique circumstances of geographic isolation.” They explain further that because of its geographical isolation from its sister churches, it is “difficult to arrange consistent pulpit exchanges.” They state that this has been an issue since 2018 and that their “pastor had/has a young family and found himself traveling over 1000kms per month to make exchanges work with pastors in Southern Ontario.”

- 3.2.1 Ottawa (Jubilee) offers the following grounds:

- 3.2.1.1 Since its unique circumstances were not considered, it was not heard and thereby justice was not rendered.
    - 3.2.1.2 Its motives were impugned when GS 2022 denied its appeal based on arguments presented in the appeals of the other two churches which were not germane to its own appeal (specifically about inviting three specific men to preach on Ottawa (Jubilee)’s pulpit with the concurring advice of Classis Central Ontario (CCO).

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3.3 Ottawa (Jubilee) appeals GS 2025 to judge that GS 2022 (art. 155 gr. 4.4.1) erred by denying their appeal based on the need for classis involvement in granting pulpit access.

3.3.1 Ottawa (Jubilee) offers the following grounds:

3.3.1.1 The article used as grounds to deny Ottawa (Jubilee)'s appeal stated that classis should be involved in granting pulpit access, Ottawa (Jubilee) had demonstrated that it had already sought the advice of CCO and church visitors appointed by CCO thereby fulfilling the requirements outlined.

3.4 Ottawa (Jubilee) appeals GS 2025 to judge that GS 2022 (art. 155 gr. 4.4.2) erred in regarding the impact of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) rules on local consistory authority.

3.4.1 Ottawa (Jubilee) offers the following grounds:

3.4.1.1 By drawing implications from the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship and using them to interpret the Church Order, GS 2022 took away all authority from the local consistory over its own pulpit and dictated who may and who may not be invited to preach (cf. CO Art.15).

3.4.1.2 Ottawa (Jubilee)'s decision to invite 3 specific men to preach on its pulpit with concurring advice of CCO does not open the door to any preacher from the respective federations of these men invited.

3.5 Ottawa (Jubilee) appeals GS 2025 to judge that GS 2022 (art. 155 gr. 4.4.3) erred by judging against Ottawa (Jubilee)'s appeal based on the contents of appeals submitted by other churches.

3.5.1 Ottawa (Jubilee) offers the following ground:

3.5.1.1 This article refers to arguments made by the other churches and contains nothing germane to their own appeal.

3.6 Ottawa (Jubilee) appeals GS 2025 to judge that GS 2022 (art. 155 gr. 4.4.4) erred by offering a suggestion instead of providing lawful grounds for the decision.

3.6.1 Ottawa (Jubilee) offers the following grounds:

3.6.1.1 Since as GS 2022 acknowledges, "our current church order does not have a specific provision regarding pulpit access for guest ministers from non-sister churches," guided by a literal reading of the Church Order, Ottawa (Jubilee) has the responsibility to guard its own pulpit;

3.6.1.2 GS 2022 uses circular reasoning to defend "present practices";

3.6.1.3 A general synod has no task to offer suggestions to the churches, only to deliver judgements based on lawful grounds;

3.5.1.4 GS 2022's assertion that the onus to update the church order is on the church deviating from "present practices" should be the exact reverse: the onus should be on those who believe something is missing in the church order.

#### 4. Considerations

4.1 *Re Observation 3.1:* Ottawa (Jubilee) identifies for itself four principles of interpreting the Church Order. However, the self-identified principles of Ottawa (Jubilee) are not of themselves binding on the rest of the federation because such principles have never been proposed to or evaluated by much less agreed upon by the churches at a general

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synod. The Canadian Reformed Churches have recognized various principles which underlie the articles of our Church Order and which are given expression therein; these have been articulated clearly at GS 2004 art. 76. Further, the principles used by our ecclesiastical assemblies to understand and apply the Church Order have also been observed in the acts of those assemblies, duly reviewed and even refined by the churches over many decades by way of appeals and overtures. Ottawa (Jubilee) has not proven how these principles are in error and so it remains these principles that the churches make use of when interpreting the Church Order.

- 4.2 *Re Observation 3.2:* GS 2022 was presented with three appeals of the same decision of RSE 2019. It is the prerogative of a synod to decide to deal with all three together. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon a broader assembly to ensure that the decision rendered clearly takes into account all the arguments made by the appellants, factoring in the unique circumstances of each. GS 2022 failed to take into account all the unique arguments presented by Ottawa (Jubilee).
- 4.3 *Re: Observation 3.3 –* GS 2022 (art. 155 gr. 4.1) also spoke of the “relevant principle of classical involvement in granting access to the pulpit (e.g. CO Art. 4.B.1 & 2) that can give guidance concerning the matter of giving pastors of non-sister churches temporary access to the pulpit.” However, Ottawa (Jubilee) demonstrated that it worked with the principle of CO art. 4 by seeking and receiving concurring advice from classis. In this Ottawa (Jubilee) followed the appropriate ecclesiastical route available to them.
- 4.4 *Re Observation 3.4:* Ottawa (Jubilee) incorrectly refers to CO 15 as regulating whom a consistory may invite to preach. In reality, CO 15 is set in the context of regulations concerning a minister within our federation (art. 4–21) and as such forbids a minister from taking it upon himself to preach (or administer the sacraments) in “another church” without the consent of the consistory of that church. Further, GS 2022 was correct to refer to the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (CO 50) and to draw implications from them for if it was understood that local consistories could already invite any minister from any church they wished, there would be no need to have such a rule for the churches in common.
- 4.5 *Re Observation 3.5:* Although it is true that the arguments of GS 2022 cited here are not a specific response to the appeal of Ottawa (Jubilee), the grounds presented still provide helpful considerations for Ottawa (Jubilee).
- 4.6 *Re Observation 3.6:* Ottawa (Jubilee) is correct that it is not the first role of general synod to provide suggestions or advice but simply to render judgement. Nevertheless, it can be beneficial to the churches when a general synod, in rendering judgement, at times provide some direction for how things might be done “decently and in good order.”

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To sustain the appeal.

## ADOPTED

G. Boot abstained as per CO 32.

## Article 179 – Overture RSE 2024: Shortening Duration of General Synod

### 1. Material

- 1.1 Overture of RSE 2024 (8.4.2.3).
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Ancaster (8.5.6.1), Attercliffe (8.5.6.2), Brampton (Grace) (8.5.6.3), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) (8.5.6.4), Caledonia (8.5.6.5), Calgary (8.5.6.6), Carman West (8.5.6.7), Chilliwack (8.5.6.8), Coaldale (8.5.6.9), Edmonton (Immanuel) (8.5.6.10), Edmonton (Providence) (8.5.6.11), Elm Creek (8.5.6.12, 8.5.6.13), Fergus (Maranatha) (8.5.6.14, 8.5.6.15), Fergus (North) (8.5.6.16), Grand Rapids (8.5.6.17), Grassie (Covenant) (8.5.6.18, 8.5.6.19), Neerlandia (8.5.6.20), Niagara South (8.5.6.21), Ottawa (Jubilee) (8.5.6.22), Smithville (8.5.6.23), St. Albert (8.5.6.24), Willoughby Heights (8.5.6.25).

### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The overture was declared admissible.

Grounds: The overture was submitted by RSE 2024 and was received on time.

- 2.2 The letters from the churches were declared admissible.

Ground: These letters interact with an overture to GS 2025 and were received on time.

### 3. Observations

- 3.1 The overture notes that the duration of general synod poses a challenge for working elders and tends to favour participation by retired or independently wealthy elders.
- 3.2 Appealing to the principle of equity implicit in CO art. 49, the overture suggests that equitable access should extend not only to ministers and elders alike, but also to elders across different ages, occupations, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The overture presents two practical proposals to address these concerns:

3.2.1 **Proposal One:** The first proposal is to adopt a hybrid model for synod meetings, combining virtual and in-person sessions. The overture cites online ecclesiastical meetings during COVID-19 pandemic and a hybrid model used by Synod 2024 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). Specifically, it proposes convening synod virtually at least one month in advance of in-person meetings to elect officers and assign advisory committees, thereby reducing the length of time delegates must be physically present.

3.2.2 **Proposal Two:** The second proposal addresses the time-consuming nature of drafting, editing and reviewing the daily acts. To improve efficiency, the overture proposes that the convening church hire a clerical support team.

- 3.3 From the letters from the churches:

3.3.1 A number of churches express unqualified support for Proposal One while others, though supportive, provide the following comments:

3.3.1.1 The deliberative nature of synods must be maintained.

3.3.1.2 Hybrid sessions should be limited to the election of officers and the appointment of advisory committee members.

3.3.1.3 The proposal may not improve the availability of delegates.

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- 3.3.1.4 The importance of testing the hybrid model prior to implementation.
- 3.3.2 A number of churches do not support Proposal One for the following reasons:
  - 3.3.2.1 Adopting a hybrid model would change the deliberative character of our assemblies.
  - 3.3.2.2 Comparisons to the CRCNA model are not helpful, citing differences in the character and frequency of their assemblies.
  - 3.3.2.3 Pre-populating the advisory committees could adversely affect delegate readiness to interact with all synod material.
  - 3.3.2.4 There is insufficient evidence that current synod length is limiting elder participation.
  - 3.3.2.5 Concerns are expressed about confidentiality and fairness, particularly the risk of lobbying or undue influence if advisory committees are announced in advance.
  - 3.3.2.6 Concerns are expressed about technical and logistical impediments, including the additional burden on the convening church, effective online engagement, and reliable internet access.
  - 3.3.2.7 Skepticism is expressed that a hybrid model will reduce the duration of synod.
- 3.3.3 A number of churches express unqualified support for Proposal Two. Others, though supportive, provide the following comments:
  - 3.3.3.1 Decisions about clerical support should be left to the convening church.
  - 3.3.3.2 Clerical support should be enlisted from the vicinity of the convening church. Individuals must be trustworthy and qualified to deal with confidential material.
- 3.3.4 A number of churches do not support Proposal Two for the following reasons:
  - 3.3.4.1 Concerns are expressed about materials of a sensitive nature being accessed by non-delegates.
  - 3.3.4.2 They remain unconvinced by the proposal's assertion about the time spent preparing and reviewing the Acts.
  - 3.3.4.3 The convening church already has the option of hiring a non-delegate for clerical support or, alternatively, a Deputy Clerk could be considered.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 Both the overture and many of the letters are right to express concern about lengthy meetings of general synods and their consequences on the availability of certain elders to serve as delegates.
- 4.2 Changes to the current general synod procedure will require thoughtful engagement on many of the issues raised by the churches.
- 4.3 The overture fails to present any meaningful details concerning the practical implications of changes to the present system, nor does it engage with the existing guidelines for general synod. It is incumbent on the local church to put forward a

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proposal that provides the details necessary for consideration by general synod. Such an overture may still be presented at a future general synod.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 Not to adopt the overture.

## ADOPTED

*Synod was adjourned for committee work.*

## Day 10 — Afternoon Session

### Friday, May 16, 2025

#### Article 180 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The Chairman had the meeting sing Psalm 113:1,2. He observed that all synod members were present and he made some housekeeping announcements.

#### Article 181 – Acts

The prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

#### Article 182 – SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section One, Part 6 (Expansion Book of Praise)

##### 1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*, Section One, Part 6 (8.2.8.1).
- 1.2 SCBP Supplement Report re Proposed Songs (8.2.8.2).
- 1.3 SCBP Further Note on SCBP Reports (8.2.8.3).
- 1.4 SCBP additional letter re mandate (re: wording of Hymn 1) (8.2.8.4).
- 1.5 Letters from the churches: Aldergrove (8.3.8.1.1, 8.3.8.1.2, 8.3.8.1.3, 8.3.8.1.4, 8.3.8.1.5), Attercliffe (8.3.8.1.6), Barrhead (8.3.8.1.7), Burlington (Fellowship) (8.3.8.1.8), Calgary (8.3.8.1.12), Devon (8.3.8.1.15), Elm Creek (8.3.8.1.21, 8.3.8.1.22) Fergus (Maranatha) (8.3.8.1.25 8.3.8.1.26), Flamborough (Redemption) (8.3.8.1.27), Grand Rapids (8.3.8.1.28), Guelph (Emmanuel) (8.3.8.1.31), Hamilton (Cornerstone) (8.3.8.1.32), Kerwood (Grace) (8.3.8.1.34), Langley (8.3.8.1.35), Neerlandia (8.3.8.1.36), Orangeville (8.3.8.1.38), Ottawa (Jubilee) (8.3.8.1.39), Owen Sound (8.3.8.1.40), Taber (8.3.8.1.42), Toronto (Bethel) (8.3.8.1.43), Winnipeg (Grace) (8.3.8.1.44), Winnipeg (Redeemer) (8.3.8.1.45), Willoughby Heights (8.3.8.1.46).

##### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The SCBP report Section One, Part 6, the SCBP Supplement Report re Proposed Songs, the SCBP Further Note on SCBP reports, and the SCBP additional letter re mandate were all declared admissible.

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Grounds: This material is from a standing synodical committee and was received on time.

2.2 The letters from the churches were declared admissible.

Grounds: The letters interact with the SCBP report to GS 2025 and were received on time.

### 3. Observations

3.1 The Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) was mandated by GS 2022 to:

- 3.1.1 Continue the process of reviewing the proposed songs according to the Guidelines for the Selection of Music in the Church, as printed in Appendix 2B of the *Acts of GS 2004* (GS 2022 art. 120 dec. 3.8.4);
- 3.1.2 Provide the churches with a single file of the updated and recommended songs (GS 2022 art. 111);
- 3.1.3 Receive for evaluation those churches' letters to GS 2022 that engage the SCBP's Supplement Reports 1 and 2 – Psalms and Hymns; to encourage the churches to send responses directly to the SCBP before March 1, 2024. Individual church members were asked to send their responses through their consistory or council;
- 3.1.4 Review the suitability of individual hymns which we already have in our *Book of Praise* for possible change, deletion, or improvement;
- 3.1.5 Evaluate additional input from the churches and prepare a report for the churches with recommendations no less than 6 months prior to the next general synod.

3.2 The SCBP provided the churches with a single file of the updated and recommended songs. They requested feedback to the SCBP before March 1, 2024.

3.3 The SCBP categorized the 43 letters submitted by the churches to GS 2022 and consolidated their observations to incorporate them into their final report to GS 2025.

3.4 The SCBP developed a three-step approach to evaluate the proposed songs. They weighed various factors, such as the wording of the song, its clarity, suitability for worship, and whether the contents are already covered in other songs in the *Book of Praise*.

3.5 The SCBP notes that the feedback from the churches was helpful. Some feedback, however, was more of an opinion than an argued position.

3.6 The SCBP notes that there appears to be a shift away from alternate psalm renditions in favour of the Genevan settings.

3.7 After testing, feedback and evaluation, the SCBP proposes nine alternate psalms for adoption. It is to be noted that these are not replacements of the Genevan settings, but additional or alternative renditions.

The list is as follows:

1. Alternate Psalm 4 – Give Ear, God of My Righteousness (text copyright)
2. Alternate Psalm 13 – How Long Will You Forget Me? (text copyright)
3. Alternate Psalm 19 – The Heavens Above Declare (text copyright)
4. Alternate Psalm 22 – Amid the Thronging Worshipers

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- 5. Alternate Psalm 23 – The Lord’s My Shepherd
- 6. Alternate Psalm 41 – Blessed Is the One Who Helps the Weak and Poor (text copyright)
- 7. Alternate Psalm 103 – Come, My Soul, and Bless the LORD (text/melody copyright)
- 8. Alternate Psalm 112 – O Praise the LORD! The Man Is Blest (text/melody copyright)
- 9. Alternate Psalm 149 – Give Praise to the LORD (text copyright)
- 3.8 To review the current hymn section, the SCBP reviewed a previous survey of the ministers (conducted prior to GS 2022). The SCBP concluded from this that no change was necessary to the hymn section in the *Book of Praise*.
- 3.9 Regarding the proposed hymns, the SCBP proposes for adoption:
  - 1. Abide with Me
  - 2. All Creatures of Our God and King
  - 3. Amazing Grace!
  - 4. Christians, Awake
  - 5. Come, Thou Almighty King
  - 6. Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
  - 7. Crown Him with Many Crowns
  - 8. Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer
  - 9. Hark! the Herald Angels Sing
  - 10. How Deep the Father’s Love for Us (text & melody copyright)
  - 11. How Great Thou Art (text & melody copyright)
  - 12. In Christ Alone (text & melody copyright)
  - 13. Let All Things Now Living (melody copyright)
  - 14. May the Mind of Christ, My Saviour
  - 15. My Lord, I Did Not Choose You
  - 16. O Christ, Our Hope, Our Heart’s Desire
  - 17. O Come, All Ye Faithful
  - 18. O Sacred Head, Now Wounded
  - 19. Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above
  - 20. Speak, O Lord (text & melody copyright)
  - 21. Take My Life, and Let It Be
  - 22. When I Survey the Wonderous Cross
  - 23. Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight (text copyright)
- 3.10 The SCBP also recommended a subset of 15 of these hymns if the hymn cap remained in place.
- 3.11 Observations from the letters of the churches:

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- 3.11.1 Aldergrove requests that a greater number of alternate psalm tunes (more than the 9 proposed) and additional hymns (not limited to 100) be available.
- 3.11.2 Aldergrove also summarized the responses from the churches in an effort to identify the levels of support for each alternate psalm and additional hymn.
- 3.11.3 Some churches showed their support for the hymn cap while others registered their dissatisfaction.
- 3.11.4 Some churches feel that the time of changing the *Book of Praise* should “come to a halt” (Barrhead, Fergus (Maranatha), Neerlandia, Taber). They also urge GS 2025 to refrain from adding alternate versions of the psalms (or place them in their own section) as it undermines the unity of this collection (Taber, Calgary). Elm Creek and Fergus (Maranatha) prefer that no change be made to the existing hymn section of the *Book of Praise*, and Neerlandia maintains that many of the proposed songs have ambiguous phrasing, archaic language, or “tunes that do not align well with the Reformed tradition.” Elm Creek questions the need for the alternate psalm renditions. Fergus (Maranatha) supports only the addition of proposed Alternate Psalms 4, 13, 23, and 41.
- 3.11.5 Burlington (Fellowship) believes the evaluation of songs and feedback from the churches is subjective. They maintain that such considerations as whether the topic of a hymn is already sufficiently covered or whether a church has an organ should not be decisive in rejecting a song for inclusion in the *Book of Praise*.
- 3.11.6 Flamborough (Redemption) expresses its frustration with the current process to approve and adopt new songs for worship. They make clear their disappointment in the rejection of many alternate psalms and additional hymns that they have grown to love. Ottawa (Jubilee) and Winnipeg (Redeemer) express a similar thought.
- 3.11.7 Flamborough (Redemption) identifies historical bias in the final selection, disagrees with the rejection of hymns and alternate psalms with strong church support, and points out the low participation in the feedback process. They also question the preference for whole psalms over partial psalms and whether hymns are “individualistic.” They disagree with the principle of rejecting hymns because their substance is already found in the *Book of Praise*.
- 3.11.8 Flamborough (Redemption) and Langley have concerns with the criterion that additional hymns should “fill a gap.” Winnipeg (Grace) notes that the idea that additional hymns should “fill a gap” directly contradicts the mandate the SCBP received from GS 2022 to propose the deletion of hymns. Many churches note that the SCBP did not appear to review existing hymns used in worship.
- 3.11.9 Grand Rapids notes that a church songbook can never be an exhaustive compendium of every song suitable for worship. They believe the SCBP should have insisted that the churches first have a discussion about their expectations for a songbook. They point out that there are inconsistencies with the use of archaic language. They are surprised that four-part harmony is being recommended when the Reformed churches, from their inception, have stressed the importance of singing in unison. On the other hand, Winnipeg (Grace) believes that if a hymn is

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meant to be sung in harmony, that is no reason to exclude it, and if approved, it should be published with the harmony included.

3.11.10 Guelph (Emmanuel) notes that it is best that the proposed change to Hymn 58, which involves a new melody, be included in the proposed augment.

3.11.11 Langley notes its renewed appreciation for the Genevan settings.

3.11.12 The Neerlandia CanRC asserts that, as the Supplemental Report notes in places, many of the proposed hymns do not add significant theological depth beyond what is already available in our hymn section.

3.12 The letters from the churches recommended approving the following specific alternate psalms and additional hymns in addition to those recommended by the SCBP:

- 3.12.1 *Alternate Psalm 11*
- 3.12.2 *Alternate Psalm 32*
- 3.12.3 *Alternate Psalm 39*
- 3.12.4 *Alternate Psalm 51*
- 3.12.5 *Alternate Psalm 59*
- 3.12.6 *Alternate Psalm 84*
- 3.12.7 *Alternate Psalm 90*
- 3.12.8 *Alternate Psalm 95*
- 3.12.9 *Alternate Psalm 100*
- 3.12.10 *Alternate Psalm 104*
- 3.12.11 *Alternate Psalm 150*
- 3.12.12 *Angels, from the Realms of Glory*
- 3.12.13 *Before the Throne of God Above*
- 3.12.14 *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*
- 3.12.15 *Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come*
- 3.12.16 *Man of Sorrows! What a Name*
- 3.12.17 *Threefold Amen*
- 3.12.18 *When Peace Like a River*
- 3.12.19 *Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me*

3.13 The letters from the churches expressed concerns about including the following specific alternate psalms and additional hymns, even though recommended by the SCBP:

- 3.13.1 *Alternate Psalm 4*
- 3.13.2 *Alternate Psalm 13*
- 3.13.3 *Alternate Psalm 22*
- 3.13.4 *All Creatures of Our God and King*
- 3.13.5 *Christians, Awake*
- 3.13.6 *Come, Thou Almighty King*
- 3.13.7 *Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer*
- 3.13.8 *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*

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- 3.13.9 *O Come, All Ye Faithful*
- 3.13.10 *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*
- 3.13.11 *Take My Life, and Let It Be*
- 3.13.12 *How Deep the Father's Love for Us*
- 3.14 The letters from the churches recommended changes to the lyrics of the following recommended alternate psalms:
  - 3.14.1 *Alternate Psalm 23*
  - 3.14.2 *Alternate Psalm 112*
  - 3.14.3 *Alternate Psalm 149*
- 3.15 Willoughby Heights requests that GS 2025 make a clear statement on the status of the principles and guidelines. They also question the value of some of these guidelines. Winnipeg (Grace) also questions these guidelines, their origin and character, and points out that these guidelines appear to be followed inconsistently.
- 3.16 Winnipeg (Grace) proposes that all the alternate psalms and additional hymns that receive support from a majority of the churches be included in an augment and that, should synod approve an overture on CO art. 55, the churches be solicited for additional psalms and hymns.
- 3.17 The SCBP was also given a letter received by GS 2022 from the church of Ancaster regarding Hymn 1 and mandated to evaluate it. The SCBP did not duly consider it and asks that this mandate be renewed by GS 2025.
- 3.18 Flamborough (Redemption) suggests that, because the SCBP appears inclined to act independently of their mandate, GS 2025 should take a serious look at the composition of SCBP. Winnipeg (Grace) asks that GS 2025 remind the SCBP that they are to serve and represent the interests of churches, not the interests or opinions of individual committee members. They suggest a more representative and transparent approach to choosing committee members by involving the minor assemblies.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) has done substantial work in facilitating and evaluating input in order to propose additional alternate psalms and additional hymns for inclusion in the *Book of Praise*. They should be thanked for their work.
- 4.2 Many churches participated in the survey and sent letters in response to the report of the SCBP. Their feedback is appreciated.
- 4.3 Some churches correctly note that continual changes to the *Book of Praise* are not desirable. Our goal as churches should be to produce a *Book of Praise* that will last for decades.
- 4.4 Some churches correctly observed that the SCBP did not diligently fulfill their mandate to consider whether some hymns could be deleted from the *Book of Praise*.
- 4.5 Hymns with four-part harmony were included when the SCBP distributed the alternate psalms and additional hymns and were well received by the churches. Winnipeg (Grace) correctly observes that when a hymn is meant to be sung in harmony, it should be published with that harmony. The Principles and Guidelines used by the SCBP rightly

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observe that the “melodies and **harmonies** [emphasis added] of church music must be suitable for congregational singing”.

- 4.6 Several churches question the status and value of the Principles and Guidelines. As the SCBP sought to fulfil its mandates to expand and review the song book, it adopted various principles and guidelines. These were shared with the churches and general synods throughout the years and had a function within the committee’s work to improve and amend the songbook. These principles and guidelines are not binding but are beneficial, though they were sometimes followed inconsistently.
- 4.7 The SCBP rightly requested that their mandate to review and evaluate a letter given to them by GS 2022 from Ancaster regarding Hymn 1 needs to be renewed.
- 4.8 Based on the feedback from the churches and the contents of the SCBP report, Synod considers it appropriate to include the following specific alternate psalms and additional hymns (see Appendix A-1 to this GS 2025 article for more details):

Alternate Psalms 32, 39, 51, 59, 84, 90, 95, 100, 104, 150 and additional hymns “Angels, from the Realms of Glory” (excluding stanza 4), “Before the Throne of God Above”, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”, “Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come”, “Man of Sorrows! What a Name”, “Threefold Amen”, “When Peace Like a River”, “Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me.”

- 4.9 Based on the feedback from the churches and the contents of the SCBP report, Synod considers it appropriate to include all the alternate psalms and additional hymns recommended by the SCBP in Observation 3.7 and Observation 3.9, with no exclusions. See Appendix A-2 to this GS 2025 article for more details.
- 4.10 Based on the feedback from the churches and the SCBP report, Synod considers it appropriate to make the following changes to the following specific alternate psalms (see Appendix A-3 to this GS 2025 article for more details):
  - 4.10.1 *Alternate Psalm 23* – modernize the first line of stanza 4 from “A table thou hast furnish-ed.” to “A table thou hast furnished me.”
  - 4.10.2 *Alternate Psalm 112* – to change stanza 4 from “he his desire will see” to “he looks in victory”, provided copyright permission can be obtained.
- 4.11 The new wording proposed by Fergus (Maranatha) for Alternate Psalm 149 should be reviewed by the SCBP.
- 4.12 The unified collection of the 150 Psalms of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter is a treasure.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To thank the members of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) for their work in proposing alternate psalms and additional hymns for inclusion in the *Book of Praise*.
- 5.2 To approve all alternate psalms and additional hymns as outlined in Considerations 4.8 and 4.9, along with the edits listed in Consideration 4.10.
- 5.3 To mandate the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP):
  - 5.3.1 To publish an authorized augment that includes the melody and text of the alternate psalms and additional hymns approved above, along with approved

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changes to Hymns 1, 55, and 58. Approved alternate psalms or additional hymns that are dependent on four-part harmony should be published in four-part harmony. Any liturgical forms updated by GS 2025 should also be included;

- 5.3.2 To review and evaluate the letter given to them by GS 2022 from the Ancaster CanRC regarding Hymn 1;
- 5.3.3 To evaluate the new wording proposed for Alternate Psalm 149 and make a recommendation to the next general synod. The current text should be included in the authorized augment. If the next general synod approves new wording, it may be included in the next complete version of the *Book of Praise*;
- 5.3.4 To review the structure of the *Book of Praise*, especially the hymn section, and propose a structure (including updated hymn numbering) to the next general synod.

## Article 182 - APPENDIX A-1

### Suggestions from the churches to approve specific alternate psalms and additional hymns

#### 1. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 11

##### 1.1 Observations:

- 1.1.1 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that the Psalm received more support than opposition from the churches surveyed.
- 1.1.2 The SCBP notes that the text seeks to be faithful, but there are several textual concerns with the lyrics.

##### 1.2 Considerations:

- 1.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. There are textual concerns with the lyrics of Psalm 11.

##### 1.3 Recommendation: To not approve Alternate Psalm 11 for inclusion.

#### 2. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 32

##### 2.1 Observations:

- 2.1.1 Owen Sound believes the variety this setting provides is valuable.
- 2.1.2 The SCBP had no concerns about the faithfulness of the lyrics to the text.
- 2.1.3 The SCBP recommended exclusion because it is a partial rendering of the Psalm, and the tune was deemed inferior to the Genevan Psalm 32.

##### 2.2 Considerations:

- 2.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this psalm is such.
- 2.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. Partial renderings of psalms can still be faithful to the text. Further, it is a common practice in the churches to sing just part of a psalm during worship. Evaluation of melodies is a largely subjective exercise.

##### 2.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 32 for inclusion.

#### 3. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 39

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3.1 Observations:

- 3.1.1 Owen Sound notes that the lyrics are faithful to the original text.
- 3.1.2 The SCBP had no concerns about the faithfulness of the lyrics to the text.
- 3.1.3 The SCBP recommended exclusion because it believed it was not more singable than the current Genevan melody.

3.2 Considerations:

- 3.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this psalm is such.

3.2.2 Evaluation of melodies is a largely subjective exercise.

3.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 39 for inclusion.

**4. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 51**

4.1 Observations:

- 4.1.1 Owen Sound notes that the strength of this setting is offering the other side of the Psalm's message, making it more fully biblical.
- 4.1.2 The SCBP recommended exclusion because it is a partial rendering of the Psalm, and the Genevan tune better conveys the mood of penitence.

4.2 Considerations:

- 4.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this psalm is such.
- 4.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. Partial renderings of psalms can still be faithful to the text. Further, it is a common practice in the churches to sing just part of a psalm during worship. Evaluation of melodies is a largely subjective exercise.

4.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 51 for inclusion.

**5. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 59**

5.1 Observations:

- 5.1.1 Owen Sound believes that the more familiar melody in this setting will encourage greater use.
- 5.1.2 Owen Sound notes that while it is not a full versification, it does convey the imprecatory nature of the Psalm.
- 5.1.3 The SCBP recommended exclusion because it is a paraphrase of the Psalm, and they believe the melody does not improve the singing of the psalm.

5.2 Considerations:

- 5.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this psalm is such.
- 5.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. Partial renderings of psalms can still be faithful to the text. Further, it is a common

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practice in the churches to sing just part of a psalm during worship. Evaluation of melodies is a largely subjective exercise.

5.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 59 for inclusion.

## 6. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 84

6.1 Observations:

- 6.1.1 Owen Sound believes that this setting is well-loved and will be frequently sung.
- 6.1.2 Owen Sound notes that while it contains older language, that is not necessarily a flaw.
- 6.1.3 The SCBP notes that archaic language has been removed in their recommendation to GS 2022.
- 6.1.4 The SCBP believes that since Genevan Psalm 84 is well-loved, there is no need for an alternative.

6.2 Considerations:

- 6.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this psalm is such.
- 6.2.2 The reason the SCBP recommended exclusion is unconvincing. Having an additional setting of an already loved Psalm will likely increase the singing of this Psalm.

6.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 84 for inclusion.

## 7. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 90

7.1 Observations

- 7.1.1 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that the Psalm received more support than opposition from the churches surveyed.
- 7.1.2 Aldergrove notes that more than 70% of churches surveyed recommended inclusion.
- 7.1.3 The SCBP notes that the lyrics are a faithful summary of the text.
- 7.1.4 The SCBP recommended exclusion because the melody uses the melody of a hymn from the TPH (*Faith of our Fathers*). Also, Psalm 90 is already covered in Hymn 54.

7.2 Considerations

- 7.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this psalm is such.
- 7.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. The melody mentioned is not included in our *Book of Praise* and only makes this setting easier to sing.

7.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 90 for inclusion.

## 8. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 95

8.1 Observations:

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- 8.1.1 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that the Psalm received more support than opposition from the churches surveyed.
- 8.1.2 Aldergrove notes that more than 70% of churches surveyed recommended inclusion.
- 8.1.3 The SCBP notes that the lyrics are good, faithful, and biblical.
- 8.1.4 The SCBP recommended exclusion because they prefer the melody of Genevan Psalm 95.

## 8.2 Considerations

- 8.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this psalm is such.
- 8.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. Evaluation of melodies is a largely subjective exercise.

## 8.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 95 for inclusion.

# 9. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 100

## 9.1 Observations:

- 9.1.1 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that the Psalm received more support than opposition from the churches surveyed.
- 9.1.2 Aldergrove notes that more than 75% of churches surveyed recommended inclusion.
- 9.1.3 The SCBP notes that the lyrics are a faithful rendition of the Psalm.
- 9.1.4 The SCBP recommended exclusion because they believe the melody is associated with another song (Crown Him with Many Crowns).

## 9.2 Considerations:

- 9.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this psalm is such.
- 9.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. Evaluation of melodies is a largely subjective exercise. High levels of support from the churches suggest an appreciation for this setting.

## 9.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 100 for inclusion.

# 10. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 104

## 10.1 Observations:

- 10.1.1 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that the Psalm received more support than opposition from the churches surveyed.
- 10.1.2 Aldergrove notes that more than 75% of churches surveyed recommended inclusion.
- 10.1.3 The SCBP notes that the lyrics faithfully reflect the text of the Psalm.
- 10.1.4 The SCBP recommended exclusion because they believe the melody is associated with another song (*Book of Praise* Hymn 84). Shorter stanzas than the Genevan version stunt the flow of thought in the song.

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#### 10.2 Considerations:

- 10.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this psalm is such.
- 10.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. Evaluation of melodies is a largely subjective exercise. High levels of support from the churches suggest an appreciation for this setting.

10.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 104 for inclusion.

### 11. Suggestion to approve Alternate Psalm 150

#### 11.1 Observations:

- 11.1.1 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that the Psalm received more support than opposition from the churches surveyed.
- 11.1.2 Aldergrove notes that more than 65% of churches surveyed recommended inclusion.
- 11.1.3 The SCBP notes that the lyrics faithfully convey the text of the Psalm.
- 11.1.4 The SCBP recommended exclusion because they believe the melody is associated with another song (All Creatures of Our God and King). They also note that the Genevan Psalm 150 is well-loved.

#### 11.2 Considerations:

- 11.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this psalm is such.
- 11.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. Evaluation of melodies is a largely subjective exercise. High levels of support from the churches suggest an appreciation for this setting.

11.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 150 for inclusion.

### 12. Suggestion to approve *Angels, from the Realms of Glory*

#### 12.1 Observations:

- 12.1.1 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that this hymn received more support than opposition from the churches surveyed.
- 12.1.2 Winnipeg (Redeemer) was disappointed to see this song omitted.
- 12.1.3 The SCBP notes difficulties with stanza 4 “saints before the altar bending...the Lord descending in his temple.” It is unlikely a congregation would make sense of these references, and therefore, recommended exclusion.

#### 12.2 Considerations:

- 12.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this hymn is such.
- 12.2.2 The liturgical needs of the church indicate that more hymns relating to Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection would be beneficial.
- 12.2.3 The concerns of the SCBP would be addressed by removing stanza 4.

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12.3 Recommendation: To approve *Angels, from the Realms of Glory* for inclusion, excluding stanza 4.

### 13. Suggestion to approve *Before the Throne of God Above*

13.1 Observations:

13.1.1 Flamborough (Redemption) believes this hymn powerfully articulates the intercessory work of Christ and highlights the doctrine of justification and assurance of salvation—essential truths which are notably underrepresented in our current *Book of Praise* Hymn section.

13.1.2 Owen Sound notes the lyrics are meaningful and the melody is beautiful.

13.1.3 The SCBP notes that the text is scriptural and the melody acceptable.

13.1.4 The SCBP recommended exclusion because they believe the topic of this hymn is covered sufficiently in *Book of Praise* Hymns (Hymns 38, 40, 42).

13.2 Considerations:

13.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and this hymn is such.

13.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. The message of this song is quite different from the hymns referenced.

13.3 Recommendation: To approve *Before the Throne of God Above* for inclusion.

### 14. Suggestion to approve *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

14.1 Observations:

14.1.1 Flamborough (Redemption) notes that this hymn is rich in doctrinal truth.

14.1.2 Flamborough (Redemption) objects to the SCBP recommendation to exclude this hymn because they deemed it individualistic (c.f. Psalms 42, 51, 116, and more).

14.1.3 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that this hymn received more support than opposition from the churches surveyed.

14.1.4 Aldergrove notes that more than 70% of churches surveyed recommended inclusion.

14.1.5 The SCBP notes that the text does not derive directly from a passage in Scripture.

14.1.6 The SCBP recommended exclusion because they believed the lyrics are somewhat individualistic.

14.2 Considerations:

14.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. The SCBP did not express any concerns with the doctrine expressed in the lyrics.

14.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. Flamborough (Redemption) correctly noted that this hymn is no more individualistic than many psalms and hymns (e.g. Psalm 42, 88, 116, and others). High levels of support from the churches suggest an appreciation for this hymn.

14.3 Recommendation: To approve *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* for inclusion.

### 15. Suggestion to approve *Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come*

### 15.1 Observations:

- 15.1.1 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that this hymn received more support than opposition from the churches surveyed.
- 15.1.2 Aldergrove notes that more than 75% of churches surveyed recommended inclusion.
- 15.1.3 The SCBP notes that the text derives from Psalm 98 and is familiar and well-known.
- 15.1.4 The SCBP recommended exclusion because they believe the repetition at the end of each stanza limited the message of the song and because it is known as a Christmas carol even though it accents the kingship of Christ.

### 15.2 Considerations:

- 15.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. The SCBP did not express any concerns with the doctrine expressed in the lyrics.
- 15.2.2 Repetition of a particular line is not a reason to exclude a song (e.g. Psalm 136).
- 15.2.3 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. High levels of support from the churches suggest an appreciation for this hymn.

15.3 Recommendation: To approve *Joy to the World! The Lord is Come* for inclusion.

## 16. Suggestion to approve *Man of Sorrows! What a Name*

### 16.1 Observations:

- 16.1.1 Owen Sound believes that the objections against this hymn re: awkward wording and a perceived lack of reverence are highly subjective.
- 16.1.2 The SCBP notes that the hymn highlights scriptural truths related to the atonement of Christ.
- 16.1.3 The SCBP recommended exclusion because the melody is short and repetitive, further emphasized by the recurring end phrase “Hallelujah! What a Saviour”.

### 16.2 Considerations:

- 16.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and these lyrics are such.
- 16.2.2 The reasons for which the SCBP recommended exclusion are subjective.

16.3 Recommendation: To approve *Man of Sorrows! What a Name* for inclusion.

## 17. Suggestion to approve *Threefold Amen*

### 17.1 Observations:

- 17.1.1 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that the song received more support than opposition from the churches surveyed.
- 17.1.2 Aldergrove notes that more than 65% of churches surveyed recommended inclusion.
- 17.1.3 The SCBP notes that this is not really a hymn but a liturgical response to the blessing at the end of the service.

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17.1.4 The SCBP recommended exclusion because approval by synod is not required in their opinion.

17.2 Considerations:

17.2.1 Many churches in our federation make use of this song in their worship services.

17.2.2 It would be helpful for those churches and others to include this song in the *Book of Praise*.

17.2.3 Because this is not a hymn, it is not clear if it requires a separate hymn number.

17.3 Recommendation: To approve *Threefold Amen* for inclusion.

## 18. Suggestion to approve *When Peace Like a River*

18.1 Observations:

18.1.1 Edmonton (Immanuel) notes that this hymn has strong support from the churches, is used often throughout the year, and the language of the hymn is well-known.

18.1.2 Langley notes this hymn is beloved in their congregation and is concerned it was excluded for purely subjective reasons.

18.1.3 Owen Sound was surprised to see this hymn questioned. They believe its richness and the depth of emotion and comfort it brings their congregation make it a valuable addition to the *Book of Praise*.

18.1.4 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that the Hymn received overwhelmingly positive support from the churches. They note that claims that the hymn is individualistic are questionable and that the SCBP is inconsistent in applying this measurement.

18.1.5 Winnipeg (Grace) believes that the fact that this hymn is meant to be sung in harmony is not a good reason to exclude it. If an approved hymn is meant to be sung in harmony, it should be published with the harmony included.

18.1.6 Winnipeg (Redeemer) pleads that this hymn be adopted because it is one of the well-known and well-loved songs of Christendom.

18.1.7 Aldergrove notes that more than 85% of churches surveyed recommended inclusion.

18.1.8 Winnipeg (Grace) notes that the SCBP's assumption that additional hymns must "fill a gap" directly contradicts the mandate given by GS 2022 to consider the deletion of existing hymns.

18.1.9 The SCBP recommended exclusion because, in their opinion, this hymn does not 'fill a gap' in the *Book of Praise* and raises concerns about individualism, archaic language, repetitiveness, sentimentality, and four-part harmony. They are also concerned it may be sung too often.

18.2 Considerations:

18.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. The SCBP did not express any concerns with the doctrine expressed in the lyrics.

18.2.2 Repetition of a particular line is not a reason to exclude a song (e.g. Psalm 136). Individualism, archaic language, and sentimentality are subjective measures that appear not to be consistently applied by the SCBP.

18.2.3 High levels of support from the churches suggest an appreciation for this hymn.

18.2.4 Winnipeg (Grace) correctly notes that songs should not be rejected out of hand by the SCBP simply because they do not 'fill a gap'.

18.3 Recommendation: To approve *When Peace Like a River* for inclusion.

## 19. Suggestion to approve *Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me*

19.1 Observations:

19.1.1 Flamborough (Redemption) believes this hymn is rich in doctrinal truth and ought not to be rejected on a subjective measure of 'individualism'.

19.1.2 Langley notes this hymn is beloved in their congregation and is concerned it was excluded for purely subjective reasons.

19.1.3 The SCBP notes that many of the churches found the words to be biblical.

19.1.4 The SCBP recommended exclusion because they believe the style and arrangement of the melody is not suitable for congregational singing, and the lyrics are somewhat individualistic.

19.2 Considerations:

19.2.1 The most important principle when evaluating songs is whether the lyrics are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity.

19.2.2 The reasons the SCBP recommended exclusion are unconvincing. Many congregations sing this hymn well. The evaluation of individualism by the SCBP is subjective and inconsistently applied.

19.3 Recommendation: To approve *Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me* for inclusion.

## Article 182 - APPENDIX A-2

### Suggestions from the churches not to approve specific alternate psalms and additional hymns that were recommended for approval by the SCBP

#### 1. Suggestion not to approve Alternate Psalm 4

1.1 Observations:

1.1.1 The Orangeville CanRC believes the melody is not an improvement and not suitable for congregational singing.

1.1.2 The SCBP notes that the text provides a complete rendition of the Psalm, and the melody is unique compared to our current collection.

1.2 Considerations:

1.2.1 The SCBP has already received and dealt with the feedback provided, and it recommends including this song.

1.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 4 for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

#### 2. Suggestion not to approve Alternate Psalm 13

2.1 Observations:

2.1.1 Orangeville says that because this psalm speaks about enemies and because there is relative peace and prosperity in Canada, the occasions for singing this psalm are few.

2.1.2 Orangeville asserts the proposed song is not thoroughly biblical. It fails to present the uniqueness of this song as the lament of the oppressed.

2.1.3 The SCBP notes that the text captures the main truths of this song and that the melody is appropriate.

## 2.2 Considerations:

2.2.1 The SCBP has already received and dealt with the feedback provided, and it recommends including this song.

2.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 13 for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

## 3. Suggestion not to approve Alternate Psalm 22

### 3.1 Observations:

3.1.1 Orangeville objects to the fact that the proposed version only represents Psalm 22: 22–28 and that the joyful lyrics do not fit the contents of the psalm.

3.1.2 The SCBP notes that this song is only a partial versification of Psalm 22 and is not intended to replace the current rendition of Psalm 22, and that this song will allow the churches to sing the last part of Psalm 22 in a cheerful tune.

### 3.2 Considerations:

3.2.1 The SCBP has already received and dealt with the feedback provided, and it recommends including this song.

3.3 Recommendation: To approve Alternate Psalm 22 for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

## 4. Suggestion not to approve *All Creatures of our God and King*

### 4.1 Observations:

4.1.1 Fergus (Maranatha) believes this hymn has some biblical inaccuracies. They question whether the sun, wind, clouds... “need” to lift up their voices and sing or if it is more accurate to say that these do already lift up their voices, but we humans do not. Fergus (Maranatha) asserts there is very little biblical depth in this hymn.

4.1.2 This hymn like many of the psalms calls on inanimate objects to praise the Lord.

### 4.2 Considerations:

4.2.1 The objections noted by Fergus (Maranatha) are invalid.

4.2.2 The SCBP recommends this hymn.

4.3 Recommendation: To approve *All Creatures of our God and King* for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

## 5. Suggestion not to approve *Christians, Awake*

### 5.1 Observations:

5.1.1 Orangeville notes that the melody is challenging and that there are other Christmas hymns being proposed.

### 5.2 Considerations:

5.2.1 The SCBP has already received and dealt with the feedback provided, and it recommends including this song.

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5.3 Recommendation: To approve *Christians, Awake* for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

## 6. Suggestion not to approve *Come Thou, Almighty King*

### 6.1 Observations:

6.1.1 Fergus (Maranatha) opposes the archaic language of this hymn. It suggests there are enough songs celebrating Christ's birth. It asserts that this hymn adds details to the angel's song that are not recorded in Scripture.

6.1.2 With respect to archaic language the SCBP notes that this classic hymn ought not to be changed. Many of the churches have specifically requested the addition of songs celebrating Christ's birth. Fergus (Maranatha) does not show how this hymn adds details that are not recorded in Scripture.

### 6.2 Considerations:

6.2.1 The SCBP recommends including this song.

6.3 Recommendation: To approve *Come Thou, Almighty King* for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

## 7. Suggestion not to approve *Guide Me O My Great Redeemer*

### 7.1 Observations:

7.1.1 Fergus (Maranatha) says that this hymn has no clear association to the Apostles' Creed; it tries to bring OT details into modern life like the spirituals; it deals mainly with personal anxiety that so hinders one from relying on God.

7.1.2 Kerwood (Grace) has concerns that the Old Testament imagery could be difficult to understand, that this hymn is not suited to the New Testament church.

7.1.3 The adoption of the hymn does not depend on fitting it into a structure based on the Apostles' Creed. The SCBP acknowledges that although the imagery used in this hymn may not be totally clear, it uses biblical imagery referring to the pilgrim's journey.

### 7.2 Considerations:

7.2.1 The SCBP already received and dealt with the feedback provided and it recommends including this Hymn.

7.3 Recommendation: To approve *Guide Me O My Great Redeemer* for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

## 8. Suggestion not to approve *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

### 8.1 Observation:

8.1.1 Fergus (Maranatha) suggest that details of the song are not scriptural.

### 8.2 Consideration:

8.2.1 The SCBP has already received and dealt with the feedback provided, and it recommends including this song.

8.3 Recommendation: To approve *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

## 9. Suggestion not to approve *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

### 9.1 Observation:

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9.1.1 Fergus (Maranatha) states this hymn includes archaic language. It asserts there are enough songs celebrated Christ's birth. It also adds details to the angels' song that are not recorded in Scripture.

9.2 Consideration:

9.2.1 The SCBP has already received and dealt with the feedback provided, and it recommends including this song.

9.3 Recommendation: To approve *O Come, All Ye Faithful*, for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

**10. Suggestion not to approve *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded***

10.1 Observation:

10.1.1 Fergus (Maranatha) suggests that "I claim you as my own" is not a biblical concept. They state that "dearest Friend" is not used appropriately.

10.2 Consideration:

10.2.1 The SCBP has already received and dealt with the feedback provided, and it recommends including this song.

10.3 Recommendation: To approve *O Sacred Head Now Wounded* for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

**11. Suggestion not to approve *Take My Life and Let It Be***

11.1 Observations:

11.1.1 Fergus (Maranatha) states this hymn includes archaic language. They state that this hymn has no clear association to the Apostles' Creed.

11.1.2 The adoption of the hymn does not depend on fitting it into a structure based on the Apostles' Creed.

11.2 Consideration:

11.2.1 The SCBP has already received and dealt with the feedback about archaic language, and it recommends including this song.

11.3 Recommendation: To approve *Take My Life and Let It Be* for inclusion as per the SCBP's recommendation.

**12. Suggestion not to approve *How Deep the Father's Love for Us***

12.1 Observations:

12.1.1 Devon expresses concern about the line, "the Father turns his face away," suggesting that it may imply an ontological change within the Trinity or promote a misunderstanding of the atonement.

12.1.2 Devon maintains that the Father never ceased to love the eternal Son and warns that many members may misinterpret the line as implying divine displeasure with Christ's person rather than with the sin he bore.

12.1.3 Devon appeals to Psalm 22:24 ("he has not hidden his face from him") to argue that Christ's cry of dereliction should not be understood as literal abandonment.

12.2 Considerations:

12.2.1 The phrase "the Father turns his face away" is a poetic expression conveying Christ's experience of divine forsakenness as he bore the full weight of sin and

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judgment on the cross. “To turn the face” either toward or away is a biblical way to express whether favour/help is granted or not (cf. Ps. 27:9, 102:2).

12.2.2 The Word of God makes it clear that on the cross Christ took upon himself our sin and all its just consequences. “It pleased the LORD to crush him.” (Isaiah 53:10) “For our sake he made him who knew no sin to be sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13).

12.2.3 The Reformed confessions affirm that Christ suffered the wrath of God in both body and soul (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 15,16). This suffering included real covenantal abandonment—not a rupture in the Trinity, but the judicial withdrawal of divine favor as Christ bore our guilt. The phrase in question seeks to express that truth in devotional language.

12.2.4 The concern that the line could be misunderstood is pastorally understandable. However, the possibility of misinterpretation does not render the line theologically inaccurate. Many faithful expressions in Scripture and song require instruction to be rightly understood. This is a normal aspect of catechesis and worship leadership.

12.2.5 Psalm 22:24 (“he has not hidden his face”) expresses the ultimate vindication and deliverance of the Sufferer, not the absence of forsakenness. Psalm 22 includes both real abandonment and real restoration. Jesus’ quotation of the opening verse on the cross must not be reduced to a mere signal of hope—it was also a genuine cry of desolation under wrath.

12.2.6 The line in question does not assert a change in the eternal relation of the divine persons, but rather depicts the redemptive moment in which the sinless Son bore divine judgment in the place of sinners. That distinction between Christ’s divine person and his mediatorial office is upheld in Reformed theology and is preserved in this line when read with confessional care.

12.3 Recommendation: To approve *How Deep the Father’s Love for Us* for inclusion as per the SCBP’s recommendation.

### Article 182 - APPENDIX A-3

#### Suggestions from the churches to change the lyrics for alternate psalms recommended by the SCBP

##### 1. Suggestion to keep Psalm 23 as it was

###### 1.1 Observations:

1.1.1 The SCBP proposes to modernize the first line of stanza 4 to “A table thou hast furnished me” from “A table thou hast furnish-ed.”

1.1.2 Winnipeg (Grace) argues that this “glaring anachronism” has been retained by the majority of modern hymnals, including the Trinity Psalter-Hymnal used by the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).

###### 1.2 Consideration:

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- 1.2.1 The SCBP already received and dealt with the feedback provided. They suggest to follow the 1912 Psalter and the version which is also in the new songbook of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ).
- 1.3 Recommendation: To adopt the modernization proposed by the SCBP to the first line of stanza 4.

## 2. Suggestion to tweak the lyrics of Psalm 112

### 2.1 Observations:

- 2.1.1 Hamilton (Cornerstone) believes the second half of stanza 4 needs improvement;

Current: *until upon his enemies, he his desire will see.*

Proposed: *until upon his enemies, he looks in victory.*

- 2.1.2 The SCBP notes that there is some “awkwardness” in the text, here and in other places.

- 2.1.3 Changing this psalm will require interaction with the copyright holder. The TPH successfully obtained permission to do something similar.

### 2.2 Consideration:

- 2.2.1 These words are an improvement.

- 2.3 Recommendation: To adopt the changes proposed by Hamilton (Cornerstone), provided copyright permission can be obtained.

## 3. Suggestion to overhaul the lyrics of Psalm 149

### 3.1 Observations:

- 3.1.1 Fergus (Maranatha) proposes new wording to this psalm and asks the SCBP to review it before adopting the present version. The proposed text is as follows:

#### Give Praise to the LORD

1. Give praise to the Lord and sing a new song.

Amid all his saints, his praises prolong.

The praise of their Maker, his people shall sing.

Let children of Zion rejoice in their King.

2. With timbrel and harp and joyful acclaim,  
with dancing and song, give praise to his name,  
for God in his people, his pleasure will seek,  
with robes of salvation adorning the meek.

3. Let saints now break out in jubilant song,  
exulting in glory all the night long.  
Let praises of God from their lips be outpoured  
as they in their hands wield a double-edged sword.

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4. They'll punish the nations, put them to shame,  
bind nobles and kings with fetters and chains,  
for God has decreed this to be their reward.  
So all saints gain glory. Give praise to the Lord!

The Psalter, 1912; revised

### 3.2 Considerations:

- 3.2.1 This proposal seems to be an improvement.
- 3.2.2 Changes can be made before the publication of the final *Book of Praise*.
- 3.2.3 The SCBP is tasked with the review and recommendation of songs for the *Book of Praise*.
- 3.3 Recommendation: To pass this wording of Psalm 149 on to the SCBP for review and possible recommendation.

## ADOPTED

### Article 183 – SCBP (*Book of Praise*) Report Section One, Parts 1,2,3 (*Shorter LS Forms*)

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP). (8.2.8.1).
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Attercliffe (8.3.8.1.6), Aldergrove (8.3.8.2.1), Barrhead (8.3.8.2.3), Caledonia (8.3.8.2.5), Calgary (8.3.8.1.12), Chilliwack (8.3.8.2.6), Grand Valley (8.3.8.2.12), Guelph (Emmanuel) (8.3.8.1.31), Nooksack Valley (8.3.8.2.13), Orangeville (8.3.8.2.14), Taber (8.3.8.1.42), Willoughby Heights (8.3.8.2.17), Arthur (8.3.8.2.2), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) (8.3.8.2.4), Edmonton (Immanuel) (8.3.8.1.17), Elm Creek (8.3.8.2.8), Fergus (Maranatha) (8.3.8.2.9), Flamborough (Redemption) (8.3.8.2.10), Guelph (Living Word) (8.3.8.2.11), St. Albert (8.3.8.2.15), Surrey (Maranatha) (8.3.8.2.16).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The report was declared admissible.  
Grounds: It was mandated by the previous general synod and was submitted on time.
- 2.2 The letters from the churches were all admissible.  
Grounds: These letters interact with a report to GS 2025 were submitted on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2022 (art. 43 gr. 3.1; art. 71 gr. 3.1.1, 3.3.1, 3.5.1) mandated the SCBP to:
  - [3.1.1] Remove the bracketed qualifier “For the Second Service” from the Abbreviated Form for the Celebration of the Lord’s supper.
  - [3.1.2] Amend the wording and musical notation of Hymn 1 and the Apostles’ Creed to the Committee’s recommendation.

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- [3.1.3] Adopt the updated language for Hymn 55 as recommended by the Committee.
- [3.1.4] Adopt the change of melody for Hymn 58 as recommended by the Committee.
- [3.1.5] The Committee has noted these changes for the next publication of the *Book of Praise* or an authorized augment.

The SCBP reports that the above points were implemented.

- 3.2 GS 2022 mandated the SCBP to “Study and propose appropriate changes to the forms for Lord’s supper (Acts, Art. 120) per the following considerations:

[GS 2019 art. 23 cons. 3.1]: RSE Nov. 2018 makes a valid point that the English language has changed and therefore the use of masculine pronouns in the forms for Lord’s supper could make them liable to misinterpretation.

[GS 2019 art. 23 cons. 3.2]: General Synod has been served by SCBP in matters of linguistic changes to the liturgical forms (see GS 2013 Art. 101). It would be advisable to ask the Committee to study this and propose appropriate changes to the Lord’s supper forms giving special attention to the personal nature of self-examination. In this process the churches would have the opportunity to interact with any proposed changes.

[GS 2022, art. 120 dec. 3.8.1]: Fulfill as yet the directive of GS 2019 to study and propose appropriate changes to the masculine pronouns used in Lord’s supper forms.

- 3.2.1 The SCBP evaluated four options for revising the self-examination section:

- 3.2.1.1 retaining third-person masculine singular,
- 3.2.1.2 using first-person plural cohortative (“Let us...”),
- 3.2.1.3 second-person singular imperative (“You...”),
- 3.2.1.4 third-person indefinite plural (“they/their”).

- 3.2.2 The Committee judged the options that use the first-person plural cohortative (3.2.1.2) and the second-person singular imperative (3.2.1.3) as the most viable, due to their greater emphasis on personal address and scriptural alignment with 1 Corinthians 11:28.

- 3.2.3 The first-person plural cohortative was recommended, supported by this rationale: the general use of first-person plural in the form, coherence with existing sections, avoiding awkwardness and gender-political connotations of “they/their.”

- 3.2.4 The SCBP recommends changing the introductory sentence under “Self-examination” to, “In order that we may now celebrate this holy supper of the Lord to our comfort, we must each first rightly examine ourselves.”

- 3.2.5 The SCBP recommends changing the wording of the paragraph on self-examination to read:

- 3.2.5.1 “First, let us consider our sins and accursedness, so that we, detesting ourselves, may humble ourselves before God. For the wrath of God against sin is so great that he could not leave it unpunished, but has punished it in his beloved Son Jesus Christ by the bitter and shameful death on the cross.

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- 3.2.5.2 Second, let us search our hearts whether we also believe the sure promise of God that all our sins are forgiven us only for the sake of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is freely given us as our own, as if we ourselves had fulfilled all righteousness.
- 3.2.5.3 Third, let us examine our consciences whether it is our sincere desire to show true thankfulness to God with our entire lives and, laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with our neighbours in true love and unity.”
- 3.2.6 Only a few churches interacted with the proposed change, and the responses were fairly evenly split between support and opposition.

3.3 GS 2022 (art. 156) mandated the SCBP to “Provide shorter forms for the celebration of the Lord’s supper” which are:

- a. Reformed in character;
- b. Comparable in content to the current forms;
- c. Shorter than the current Abbreviated Form.

3.3.1 The SCBP reviewed forms from sister churches and found that while some were shorter, most lacked completeness. Only the RCUS form was comparable in content, but it was longer than the current abbreviated form.

3.3.2 The SCBP drafted two new short forms:

- 3.3.2.1 Short Form #1: based on Scripture and Confessions (with and without citations).
- 3.3.2.2 Short Form #2: more concise and thematic, emphasizing covenantal and confessional truths.
- 3.3.2.3 Both forms aim to preserve the Reformed doctrine of the Supper, include essential elements such as institution, explanation, self-examination, admonition, communion, and prayer.
- 3.3.2.4 The Committee suggested adding a “usage note” recommending that these shorter forms be used in rotation with the long form to maintain doctrinal richness over time.

3.3.3 Several churches expressed appreciation for the availability of shorter forms, especially for use in the churches where the Lord’s supper is celebrated more frequently. These churches welcomed the reduced length, confessional clarity, and liturgical usability of the new forms.

3.3.4 Some churches expressed support for the adoption of the proposed shorter forms, however most of these churches suggested there is a need for revision and improvement.

3.3.5 Other churches expressed opposition to the adoption of the proposed shorter forms for various reasons, including the perception that changes are driven by perceived cultural pressure rather than theological need, lack of reverence, missing admonition and self-examination, and weak prayers.

3.3.6 Some churches expressed support for the usage note.

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#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 With respect to the GS 2022 (art. 43 & 71) mandate, “Implementation of Synod decisions on Committee proposals,” the SCBP has fulfilled the mandate of GS 2022.
- 4.2 With respect to the GS 2022 (art. 120) mandate, “Study and propose appropriate changes to the forms for Lord’s supper”:
  - 4.2.1 The SCBP fulfilled its mandate to explore the linguistic challenges associated with the use of masculine pronouns in the Lord’s supper form and provided a thoughtful analysis of available options.
  - 4.2.2 The recommended first-person plural cohortative aligns with the general tone and structure of the existing Lord’s supper form, maintaining continuity and corporate liturgical voice, while the strengthened introductory sentence effectively safeguards the individual nature of self-examination.
  - 4.2.3 Although a number of churches expressed a preference for the second-person imperative as more personal and direct, this grammatical form would introduce a tonal shift inconsistent with the rest of the form and could fragment the unified language of the liturgy. The cohortative form, especially with the proposed introductory revision, adequately addresses concerns about personal application.
  - 4.2.4 The two shorter forms drafted by the SCBP fulfill the core elements of the Synod 2022 mandate: they are Reformed in character, comparable in content to the current forms, and shorter than the existing Abbreviated Form.
  - 4.2.5 By choosing to use the headings in our current form as guidelines, the SCBP unnecessarily limited its study of the forms of sister churches to those which were virtually identical, rather than to those which were comparable.
  - 4.2.6 While some churches expressed concern that the shorter forms lacked the doctrinal depth or admonitory weight of the longer form, such concerns do not justify rejecting the forms outright.
  - 4.2.7 A period of testing and feedback will allow churches to assess the forms in context and provide meaningful input. Further refinement is best achieved through this broader use and interaction.
  - 4.2.8 The inclusion of Scripture references in Short Form #1 was widely appreciated and adds clarity and authority. Churches should have the flexibility to choose the version (with or without citations) that best fits their local context.
  - 4.2.9 Concerns about the proposed “usage note”—particularly whether it constitutes an undue limitation on local discretion—indicate that such a note should not be included.
  - 4.2.10 Although some churches requested a broader collection of shorter forms, care must be taken not to proliferate forms unnecessarily. Multiplying forms risks undermining liturgical unity and could burden the churches with excessive variation. The current shorter forms should be tested and evaluated before any expansion is considered.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

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- 5.1 To thank the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) for its diligent work in fulfilling its task as mandated by GS 2022.
- 5.2 To provisionally adopt the proposed revision to the self-examination section of the Lord's supper form, as indicated in observations 3.2.4 and 3.2.5, for use in the churches until the next general synod, with the understanding that it is to be used on a testing basis, not as finally adopted form.
- 5.3 To provisionally adopt Short Form #1 and Short Form #2 for use in the churches until the next general synod, with the understanding that they are to be used on a testing basis, not as finally adopted forms.
- 5.4 To mandate the committee appointed by GS 2025 (art. 175) to:
  - 5.4.1 Solicit feedback from the churches on the use of the two short forms;
  - 5.4.2 Evaluate the feedback and propose any necessary editorial refinements;
  - 5.4.3 Report to the next general synod with a recommendation regarding formal adoption, revision, or discontinuation of the forms;
  - 5.4.4 To review the Lord's supper forms of the United Reformed Churches of America (URCNA), the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), and the Reformed Churches of the United States (RCUS) with a view to proposing alternate forms for use within the churches;
  - 5.4.5 To send this report to the churches no later than six (6) months prior to the next General Synod;
- 5.5 To name this ad hoc committee the "Committee on Liturgical Forms."

## ADOPTED

### Article 184 – Overture CCO Jun 2020: phrase “summarized in the *confessions*”

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 CCO Overture, dated June 5, 2020 (8.4.1.2).
- 1.2 Letter from Hamilton (Blessings) dated September 30, 2024, submitting the overture directly to Synod, according to GS 2022 art. 78 (8.4.1.1).
- 1.3 Letters from the following churches: Ancaster (8.5.8.1), Arthur (8.5.8.2), Attercliffe (8.5.8.3), Brampton (Grace) (8.5.8.4, 8.5.8.5), Burlington (Ebenezer) (8.5.8.6, 8.5.8.7), Burlington (Fellowship) (8.5.8.8), Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) (8.5.8.9), Calgary (8.5.8.10), Carman East (8.5.8.11), Carman West (8.5.8.12), Chilliwack (8.5.8.13), Dunnville East (8.5.8.14), Edmonton (Immanuel) (8.5.8.15), Fergus North (8.5.8.16), Grand Rapids (8.5.8.17), Grand Valley (8.5.8.18), Houston (8.5.8.19, 8.5.8.20), Kerwood (Grace) (8.5.8.21), Langley (8.5.8.22), Niagara South (8.5.8.23), Orangeville (8.5.8.24), Ottawa Jubilee (8.5.8.25), Sardis (8.5.8.26), Smithville (8.5.8.27), Tintern Spring Creek (8.5.8.28), Willoughby Heights (8.5.8.29), Winnipeg (Redeemer) (8.5.8.30).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The overture was declared admissible.

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Grounds: This overture was submitted directly by the Hamilton (Blessings) CanRC, as authorized by the decision of GS 2022 art. 78. GS 2022 had sustained an appeal concerning this matter but ruled that the overture itself could not be adopted at that time due to procedural grounds (lack of prior church interaction), instructing that a church could resubmit the overture directly to GS 2025 after distributing it to all churches.

2.2 The letters from the churches were declared admissible.

Ground: These letters interact with an overture to GS 2025 and were received on time.

### 3. Observations

- 3.1 The overture proposes to amend the questions in the liturgical forms for Baptism of Infants, Baptism of Adults, and Public Profession of Faith by replacing the term “confessions” with “Apostles’ Creed.” Thus, for example, the first question of the Public Profession of Faith form would read, “First, do you wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the Apostles’ Creed and taught here in this Christian church?”
- 3.2 GS 1977 gave the following mandate (among others) to the Committee on Translation and Revision of the Confessional and Liturgical Forms, “to revise the Liturgical Forms and to update the language, especially the Form for the Holy Supper and the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage.” The committee gave no recommendation to GS 1980 to revise the liturgical questions of the baptism or public profession of faith forms. No church requested a change to these forms.
  - 3.2.1 GS 1980 art. 129 cons. 10 simply states, “Consistency should be maintained with respect to ‘summarized in the Creeds’” but no explanation is given for switching from “articles of the Christian faith” to “the Creeds.”
  - 3.2.2 GS 1983 art. 145 cons. 4 gives revisions to the various forms including replacing the term “creeds” with “confessions.” Under the form for the baptism of infants, the following is mentioned, 4A8 “In order to avoid misunderstanding, the word ‘creeds’ in the second question should be replaced by ‘confessions.’” (In the other two forms, 4B4 and 4C3, the fact of the replacement is simply mentioned.) This change was simply made at GS 1983 without any recommendation by the committee or request by a church.
  - 3.2.3 GS 1986 art. 144 dealt with a substantive appeal against this decision of GS 1983 to change “creeds” to “confessions.” The appeal was denied without substantiation, simply claiming that when LD 7 says that a Christian must believe all that is promised us in the gospel, which the articles of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith teach us in a summary, “it does not suggest that this basic summary excludes the further confession [sic] given in the Three Forms of Unity.” It did not appreciate that the “articles of the Christian faith” specifically refers to the Apostles’ Creed (cf. LD 7, QA 22).
  - 3.2.4 Subsequent appeals against the procedural errors were denied on the basis that the change from “articles of the Christian faith” to “creeds” and then “confessions” was merely linguistic (GS 1989 art. 161, cons. C1, and GS 1992 art. 121 cons. 3A & art. 122 cons. 3C).

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3.2.5 It is the conviction of this overture that previous synods erred by declaring that the change was merely linguistic.

3.3 The overture gives the following grounds for its argument that the change from “articles of the Christian faith” to “confessions” was wrong and not merely a linguistic change and that therefore the change should be reversed and the original wording with articles of the Christian faith referring to “Apostles’ Creed” be restored.

- 3.3.1 Throughout most of church history, the Apostles’ Creed has been closely connected to the sacrament of baptism, as infants of believing parents and adult baptism takes place in the name of the triune God.
- 3.3.2 The Apostles’ Creed is referred to in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 7, Q/A 22 as a summary of what a Christian must believe.
- 3.3.3 The Apostles’ Creed is what is referred to in the pre-1980 form as “the articles of the Christian faith” – this expression is a direct quote from Heidelberg Catechism, LD 7, Q/A 22.
- 3.3.4 The use of “confessions” instead of “Apostles’ Creed” in the current form has led to the erroneous idea of “confessional membership,” that one can only become a communicant member of a CanRC if one unequivocally pledges allegiance to the Reformed confessions (the Three Forms of Unity; cf. GS 1986 (art.144, cons. C2) which explained the phrase “as taught here in this Christian church” as “one gives allegiance to all the confessions of the church”). The overture argues that making public profession of faith is not about giving allegiance to specific theological documents, but rather about responding to the personal promises of the triune God. Dr. N. Gootjes notes that the phrase “taught here in this Christian church” refers to the preaching and catechetical instruction of the church which was in line with the Reformed confessions. Also from a historical perspective, those answering these questions would not have had theological knowledge beyond the Apostles’ Creed but they agree to accept and submit to Reformed teaching and preaching.
- 3.3.5 At the end of section D, the overture clarifies the central role of the Reformed confessions in the Church’s teaching: “The Canadian Reformed churches are confessional churches and should remain so. Officebearers in the Canadian Reformed churches subscribe to the Reformed confessions and should continue to do so. The Scriptures, as faithfully summarized in the Reformed confessions, must be preached and taught without apology. Members of local Canadian Reformed churches, even those who dispute some confessional affirmations, must accept Reformed teaching and preaching (so as to remain teachable and not promote contrary teaching).”
- 3.3.6 Switching back to “Apostles’ Creed” (equivalent to “articles of the Christian faith”) from “confessions” will bring the CanRC into alignment with sister-churches, for example, the URCNA. For instance, the Trinity Psalter Hymnal (TPH) uses the phrase “articles of the Christian faith” in 5 out of 6 forms: in both of the infant baptism forms and in both of the public profession of faith forms and in one of the adult baptism forms. The other adult baptism form uses “confessions of this church”.

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3.4 While some churches support the overture and agree with its argumentation, other churches disagree with the overture or have some questions surrounding the following matters:

- 3.4.1 Some churches argue that the matter has been decided upon by previous general synods and therefore should not be reopened.
- 3.4.2 Some churches object that the confessions are essentially just an elaboration of the Apostles' Creed and therefore do not see a tension between the two, and see no need to revert back to the original wording.
- 3.4.3 Some churches object to the expression "impersonal theological formulations" (Overture, Section B, p.4) and hold that an unnecessary false dilemma is created between God's personal promises and the confessions.
- 3.4.4 Some churches are concerned that "Apostles' Creed" is too minimalist for public profession of faith.
- 3.4.5 Some churches wonder how CO art. 61, which specifies that only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith shall be admitted to the Lord's supper, would function when "confessions" has been replaced by "Apostles' Creed".
- 3.4.6 Some churches wonder how church discipline for false teaching would function when "confessions" has been replaced by "Apostles' Creed."
- 3.4.7 Some churches are concerned with the confusion and possible weakened Reformed confessional identity that might result among church members if the established practice (for around 40 years) of the current question is changed back to the pre-1980 version.
- 3.4.8 Smithville believes that the change from "articles of the Christian faith" to "confessions" arose from the broader context of the struggles in the Dutch churches with respect to the necessity of confessional subscription in the second half of the 1960s, and the decades which followed. Some of the undermining of the authority of the confessions was thought to be trickling over to Canada as well and therefore to ensure the confessional fidelity of the CanRC, it was felt to be a good idea to switch to "creeds" and then "confessions" in the 1980s in Canada.
- 3.4.9 Ancaster draws attention to GS 1971 art. 93, "The Churches should stick to the soundly Reformed position of the first Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches that the basis of the federation is the submission to the Word of God, in complete binding of all its members, specifically its office-bearers and delegates to the Creeds and the Church Order."
- 3.4.10 Ancaster further draws attention to an agreement between the CanRC and the OPC, finalized in 2001: "The churches of the Reformation believe that they have to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and are called to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned (Rom 16:17). Anyone who answers the membership vows in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible. The patristic church has summarized this teaching in the Apostles' Creed and the churches of the Reformation have elaborated on this in their confessions. Every confessing member is bound to this doctrine and must be

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willing to be instructed in it. (CCOPC Report to GS 1998; see *Acts of GS 1998*, Appendix 8, p. 308; it was finally adopted by GS 2001 art. 45 dec. 5.5).

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Liturgical Forms for Baptism and Public Profession of Faith are vital instruments for the edification and worship of the church and must accurately reflect the truth of Scripture and the confessional basis of our faith in a manner that is clear, pastoral, and according to the Church Order.
- 4.2 The initial changes to the wording in 1980 and 1983 occurred outside the normal and proper church orderly procedures for revising such fundamental documents. Church order principles dictate that significant matters affecting the churches in common should originate from the churches through overtures or synodical committee reports, allowing for careful study and input from the congregations. The absence of such a process in 1980 and 1983 constitutes a serious procedural error that warrants revisiting the matter.
- 4.3 When a serious procedural error has occurred in the past, integrity and truthfulness demands that the situation be addressed and rectified. It is not appropriate to let such matters lie simply because, in the view of some churches, a desirable outcome has been achieved. Matters cannot be considered settled and binding which rest on a demonstrably erroneous foundation.
- 4.4 While the confessions as a whole faithfully summarize the doctrine of God's Word, the Apostles' Creed holds a unique historical and theological place as an ancient, ecumenical, and baptismal creed. It succinctly summarizes the core truths of the gospel, particularly concerning the Triune God and the work of Christ, which are central to baptism (Matthew 28:19). Emphasizing this foundational creed in the baptismal and profession questions for members aligns with the catholicity of the church, highlighting the shared faith of the Church of all times and places.
- 4.5 The language of our Reformed confession, the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 7, Q/A 22-23), in response to the question "what must a Christian believe?" uses the phrase "articles of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith" and explicitly equates this phrase with the Apostles' Creed. It is fitting and appropriate that the questions in the Liturgical Forms are consistent with the language found in our Confession, supporting the use of either the original phrasing "articles of the Christian faith" or the phrase "Apostles' Creed" as its direct referent.
  - 4.5.1 Ancaster is correct that the phrase "impersonal theological formulations" is an unnecessarily pejorative description of the Heidelberg Catechism's expression of faith. Certainly, the Catechism is a deeply personal confession of faith. The Canons of Dort also offers much practical encouragement and comfort to the elect. The point of the overture is that the increased depth and detailed explanation of the Three Forms of Unity can potentially run the risk of obscuring the fact that at the time the vows are made, it is a response to the clear personal promises of the triune God.
- 4.6 The phrase "and taught here in this Christian church" serves as a vital reference to the teaching ministry of the church that expounds upon the doctrine summarized in the Apostles' Creed, which includes teaching from the confessions. Reverting to a phrase equivalent to the original wording clarifies that the primary summary confessed at

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foundational moments such as baptism and profession of faith, is the Apostles' Creed, which is then further explained and elaborated upon through the teaching of the confessions within the church. This approach recognizes that there are different expectations of members versus office-bearers (who subscribe to the confessions) while still maintaining that the doctrine taught in the church is Reformed doctrine, rooted in Scripture and summarized in the confessions. This is affirmed in the overture at the end of point D.

- 4.6.1 The vows made by members at their public profession of faith are distinct from the confessional subscription required of office-bearers. The member is confessing to believe the doctrine of Scripture taught in the church, not necessarily a working knowledge of Reformed doctrines confessed in the Three Forms of Unity at a level that enables one to teach and refute. As noted in the letter from Ottawa (Jubilee), if the profession of faith were equivalent to confessional subscription, office-bearers would not require a separate act of subscription as part of their ordination.
- 4.7 Currently with the questions in the Baptism and Profession of Faith forms containing "confessions," there are members who answer the question but do not fully comprehend the Reformed confessions. This is a significant problem and not an uncommon one, which the church must avoid as much as possible.
- 4.8 In a number of letters from the churches, some questions or objections are raised with respect to the requirement in CO art. 61 for consistories to admit only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith to the Lord's supper. This CO article is not undermined by stating "summarized in the Apostles' Creed and taught here in this Christian church" in the liturgical questions. The "Reformed faith" is the doctrine taught in the CanRC based on Scripture as summarized in the confessions. The phrase "taught here in this Christian church" explicitly connects the confession of the Creed to the confessional teaching context of the church, which for example explains the creed in the Lord's Days 7-22. The questions in the Forms for Infant and Adult Baptism and Profession of Faith must be understood and applied in the broader context of the church's teaching ministry, which is bound by the confessions. The consistory's examination process further ensures that the profession aligns with the Reformed faith. Therefore, the proposed wording is consistent with the requirement of professing the Reformed faith for admission to the Lord's supper.
- 4.8.1 When the overture calls the concept of "confessional membership" an error, it overstates its case. Members of the CanRC who have made public profession of faith are bound by Reformed doctrine as found in the Three Forms of Unity since those are the Reformed confessions to which the office-bearers have subscribed and according to which the church preaches and teaches. In the first question of the Form for the Profession of Faith, believers profess that they wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God ... taught here in this Christian church. In so doing, they bind themselves to the church's teaching which is according the Three Forms of Unity. In answer to the fourth question, believers promise to submit to the discipline of the church if it should happen that they become delinquent in doctrine or life. The standard for judging such delinquency is the Word of God as the church confesses it in the Three Forms of Unity.

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4.8.2 At the same time, it is true that the term “confessional membership” can be misused in a way which obscures the catholicity of the church and can create the mistaken impression that only those who have bound themselves to the Three Forms of Unity can be true Christians.

4.8.3 The term “confessional membership” should not be understood to exclude those from membership who struggle, as yet, to affirm a particular point of Reformed doctrine. The overture rightly points out that historically such individuals have still been received into membership provided that they are educable and submissive to the teaching of the church and they refrain from causing public discord or division.

4.9 While the current wording has been in use for a significant period of some 40 years in the churches, it should be noted that the Reformed churches have used the phrase “articles of the Christian faith” for hundreds of years, since the late 1500s. For instance, the 1566 Form for the Baptism of Infants by Dathenus uses the phrase “articles of the Christian faith” in the second question; this phrase was used in the Forms published in Psalters during the remainder of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and into the 17<sup>th</sup>. The post-acts of the great Synod of Dort contain an adult baptism form which uses the same phrase.

4.9.1 The argument that the word “confessions” is necessary in order to ensure a “Reformed” profession of faith necessarily implies that from the late 1500s until 1980, Reformed consistories were admitting to the Lord’s supper members who had not made public profession of the Reformed faith.

4.9.2 It is significant to note that in the context of the previously mentioned struggles in The Netherlands (which involved some desiring to loosen the ties to the Reformed confessions), the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) did not change the questions in their forms from “articles of the Christian faith” to “confessions” but retained “articles of the Christian faith.”

4.9.3 The quote from GS 1971 art. 93 demonstrates that, when the CanRC still had the phrase “articles of the Christian faith” in the questions in the forms of baptism and profession of faith, this was in the context of an unapologetic and unequivocal commitment to the Three Forms of Unity for members and specifically for office bearers.

4.10 With respect to the concerns raised about the pastoral impact of changing the wording back, pastoral care and diligent teaching can mitigate confusion and help members understand the relationship between the Apostles’ Creed and the Reformed confessions as faithful summaries of God’s Word. The current wording, understood by some to imply the requirement for a comprehensive understanding of the Reformed confessions, can in fact create pastoral burdens for sincere believers that a return to the more historically Reformed phrase can alleviate.

4.11 Sustaining the overture rectifies past procedural errors and allows the churches to return to a wording that is strongly supported by historical Reformed practice, the explicit teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism, and a focus on the core gospel truths confessed at baptism and public profession of faith, without abandoning the importance of the confessions as guiding summaries of the doctrine taught in the church.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

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- 5.1 To sustain the overture from Classis Central Ontario (CCO).
- 5.2 To replace the words “summarized in the confessions” in the Form for the Baptism of Infants, the Form for the Baptism of Adults, and the Form for the Public Profession of Faith, with the words “summarized in the Apostles’ Creed.”
- 5.3 To instruct the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) to update the wording of the above forms according to this decision.

**ADOPTED**

L. Kok had his negative vote recorded.

**Article 185 – Convening Church Guidelines****1. Material**

- 1.1 Letter from the Aldergrove Steering Committee (12.1).
- 1.2 Current Appendix 28 – Guidelines for General Synods.

**2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The letter was declared admissible

Grounds: It is from the steering committee of the convening church and regards the operations of general synod.

**3. Observations**

- 3.1 Appendix 28, Section I.A currently permits the convening church to take “whatever measures are needed” to improve synod operations but offers little specific direction.
- 3.2 The Aldergrove Steering Committee provided helpful reflections based on experience, including suggestions related to email organization, file management, spreadsheet tracking, and coordination with the federation website.
- 3.3 In our current system, the full agenda (including appeals and church correspondence) is distributed to all synod delegates, while churches receive only the public portion of the agenda (excluding appeals and correspondence from churches).
- 3.4 A clearer and more detailed description of the convening church’s role in agenda preparation would improve consistency, transparency, and efficiency in the lead-up to general synod, while still respecting synod’s authority and the confidentiality of certain materials.
- 3.5 The Aldergrove Steering Committee raised the possibility of appointing a stated clerk to assist with synod planning and transitions.

**4. Considerations**

- 4.1 It is desirable to assist future convening churches by explicitly outlining best practices for agenda preparation and document handling.
- 4.2 The proposed text provides such guidance without creating a new permanent office or interfering with synod’s freedom to alter the agenda.
- 4.3 Including distinctions between what is sent to delegates versus what is shared with all churches preserves current confidentiality practices and honours ecclesiastical norms.

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- 4.4 Adopting this expanded description in Appendix 28 will promote greater continuity between synods and relieve future convening churches of unnecessary guesswork.
- 4.5 While the idea of a stated clerk reflects a valid concern for continuity and administrative efficiency, these goals can be adequately achieved by strengthening the role of the convening church within the existing polity.
- 4.6 For the benefit of the churches and all synodically-appointed committees, establishing the date of the next general synod in a timely fashion is important.

## 5. Recommendation

- 5.1 To revise the first paragraph of section 1.A of the Guidelines for General Synod (see Appendix 28 of the *Acts of GS 2022*) to read as follows:
  - 5.1.1 The convening church shall set the date on which Synod shall meet (cf. CO Art. 49). It shall give notice of this date to all the churches of the federation *two years* in advance of the date for the next general synod. It shall also publish this date at [www.canrc.org](http://www.canrc.org).
- 5.2 To replace the last paragraph of Section I.A of Appendix 28 – Guidelines for General Synods with the following:
  - 5.2.1 The convening church shall take responsibility for preparing a provisional agenda for synod. To this end, it shall receive and organize all submissions in an orderly and transparent manner. This includes:
    - 5.2.1.1 Creating a synod-specific email address for all synod-related correspondence and submissions.
    - 5.2.1.2 Acknowledging receipt of submissions and maintaining a tracking log that records the source, subject, date received, and format of each item.
    - 5.2.1.3 Assigning each submission to a suitable agenda category (e.g., reports, overtures, appeals, correspondence) and assigning each item a unique provisional agenda number.
    - 5.2.1.4 Standardizing document formats (e.g., searchable PDF) and applying consistent file naming conventions that reflect the agenda number, topic, source, and date.
    - 5.2.1.5 Coordinating with the federation’s website committee to ensure that all public materials are posted consistently and accessibly while also ensuring confidentiality of delegate-only items.
    - 5.2.1.6 Preparing a shared digital folder system for synod delegates, organized by agenda categories and item numbers, containing all submitted materials in downloadable form.
    - 5.2.1.7 Distributing the provisional agenda and supporting materials as follows:
      - 5.2.1.7.1 To all synod delegates: the full agenda with hyperlinks to all supporting documents, including appeals and church correspondence.
      - 5.2.1.7.2 To all churches and the federation’s website: the full agenda with hyperlinks only to public materials (i.e., reports and overtures). Items such as appeals or correspondence from individual churches are to be listed in the agenda but not made publicly available.

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- 5.2.1.7.3 Sending the provisional agenda to the churches and to the federation website 6 months and 6 weeks before synod.
- 5.2.1.7.4 Sending provisional agendas to the delegates at intervals of approximately 6 months, 4 months, 3 months, and 6 weeks prior to synod.

## ADOPTED

### Article 186 – GS 2022 Finances

#### 1. Material

- 1.1 Report re GS 2022 cover letter (Guelph (Emmanuel)) (8.2.1.1).
- 1.2 Financial Report GS 2022 (Guelph (Emmanuel)) (8.2.1.2).
- 1.3 Audit [Review] Report re GS 2022 (Guelph (Living Word)) (8.2.1.3).
- 1.4 Calgary letter re GS 2022 (8.3.1.2).

#### 2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The reports were declared admissible.  
Grounds: They were mandated by a general synod and were received on time,
- 2.2 The letter from Calgary was declared admissible.  
Grounds: It pertains to the above reports and was received on time.

#### 3. Observations

- 3.1 The Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC submitted a financial report for GS 2022, which included revenue and expenditures shared between RSW and RSE, in accordance with synod decisions.
- 3.2 A review of these financial records was performed by members of Guelph (Living Word), who confirmed that the books appeared to be in good order and followed the guidelines laid out in the *Acts of GS 2022*.
- 3.3 Calgary submitted a letter of appreciation for the financial work of GS 2022.
- 3.4 A cover letter from Guelph (Emmanuel) accompanied the financial report and review, submitted as per the mandate from GS 2022.
- 3.5 The financial documents are included in Appendix 22.

#### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The financial responsibilities for GS 2022 were carried out in a diligent, transparent, and cooperative manner.
- 4.2 The review provides confidence that the funds were handled appropriately.
- 4.3 It is fitting for Synod to recognize the service of the churches and members involved.

#### 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To receive the financial report and review of Synod 2022 with thankfulness and to include these materials in the *Acts of GS 2025* (see Appendix 22).

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- 5.2 To thank the Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC for its financial administration and submission of the report.
- 5.3 To thank the Guelph (Living Word) CanRC for conducting the review.
- 5.4. To note with appreciation the letter of appreciation from the Calgary CanRC.

## **ADOPTED**

### **Article 187 – General Fund**

#### **1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the General Fund as administered by Carman East. (8.2.12.1.)
- 1.2 Report of the review of the General Fund by Carman West. (8.2.12.2.)

#### **2. Admissibility**

- 2.1 The reports were declared admissible.

Grounds: Although received after the deadline of 6 weeks prior to general synod, they both were mandated by the previous general synod and are necessary to be dealt with for the good functioning of the General Fund.

#### **3. Observations**

- 3.1 GS 2022 art. 32 appointed the Carman East CanRC to administer the General Fund for the period 2022–2024.
- 3.2 The financial report submitted by Carman East indicates:
  - 3.2.1 Total assessments received from the churches: \$99,366.87.
  - 3.2.2 Total expenses: \$129,968.96.
  - 3.2.3 Closing bank balance as of December 31, 2024: \$7,364.71.
  - 3.2.4 The fund was used for expenses including: Committee on Ecumenical Relations, *Book of Praise* expenses, website committee costs, printing, and bank charges.
- 3.3 The Carman West CanRC was delegated to review the financial records. On February 25, 2025, two elders from Carman West met with the bookkeeper and confirmed that the books and statements were in good order.
- 3.4. Carman East notes that Sr. Hilly Kooiker stepped down from her role as treasurer and was replaced by Sr. Jolene Bouwman.
- 3.5 The reports of both churches were received past the six-week deadline mandated by GS 2022 with no explanation given. The fiscal year for the General Fund currently ends December 31 each calendar year.

#### **4. Considerations**

- 4.1 Carman East has faithfully executed the mandate it received from GS 2022 and has maintained accurate and transparent records of the General Fund.
- 4.2 The review conducted by Carman West affirms the integrity and correctness of the financial statements submitted.

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- 4.3 Acknowledgment is appropriate for both the work of the treasurer and the church overseeing the fund, and for those who reviewed it.
- 4.4 In the interest of transparency and accountability to the churches, it would be good for both reports to be distributed to the churches at least 6 months in advance of the next general synod. To do that effectively, it would be good to adjust the fiscal year to September 30. This would give sufficient opportunity for the two churches to formulate their reports in time to meet this new reporting deadline.
- 4.5 Because such financial reports may contain sensitive information, it is best that they are not immediately published on the federation website. Rather, they should first be dealt with by the next general synod which can then decide if and how to publicize such reports.

## 5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To receive with gratitude the financial report submitted by the Carman East CanRC regarding the General Fund for the years 2022–2024.
- 5.2 To express its appreciation to Sr. Hilly Kooiker for her years of service as treasurer, and to Sr. Jolene Bouwman for taking over this responsibility.
- 5.3 To thank the Carman West CanRC for reviewing the financial records and confirming their accuracy.
- 5.4 To discharge the Carman East CanRC from its responsibilities for the General Fund for the years 2022–2024.
- 5.5 To mandate the Carman East CanRC to undertake the process of adjusting its fiscal reporting year to September 30 and to complete this no later than 2027.
- 5.6 To mandate both churches to report to the next general synod on their activities no later than six (6) months prior by sending their reports to the convening church with the request for that church to send both reports to all the churches in the federation forthwith (but, for greater clarity, not to publish them on the federation website).
- 5.7 To require that before any synodical committee submits expenses to the General Fund, someone from within that committee must first verify those expenses.

## **ADOPTED**

*See Appendix 23 for the General Fund Report.*

## **Article 188 – Appointments**

Synod went into closed session. Rev. S.C. Van Dam left the meeting while his appointment to the Board of Governors was discussed.

### **1. Material**

- 1.1 Submissions from: RSE 2024 (9.1.1), RSW 2024 (9.1.2), the Board of Governors of CRTS (9.1), the CWeb (9.6.1), the CER (9.3.1), the SCBP (9.4.1).
- 1.2 Two letters from Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) (9.8.1; 9.12.1).

## 2. Admissibility

2.1 All submissions were declared admissible as they pertain to the appointment of individuals to synodical committees and the appointment of churches as synodical committees.

## 3. Recommendations

That Synod make the following appointments:

2.1 Board of Governors (BoG) of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS):

2.1.1 Academic Committee:

2.1.1.1 From Eastern Canada: Dr. Jeff Temple (2031), Rev. Clarence VanderVelde (2028); Rev. Ian Wildeboer (2034);

Alternates: Rev. T. Vandergaag; Rev. J. VanWoudenberg (in that order);

2.1.1.2 From Western Canada: Rev. S. Carl Van Dam (2034); Rev. Doug Vandeburgt (2034); Rev. Julius VanSpronsen (2031);

Alternates: Rev. Calvin Vanderlinde, Rev. Rick Vanderhorst (in that order).

2.1.2 Finance and Property Committee:

2.1.2.1 Adrian Bartels (2031), Mike Bork (2034), Paul Broekema (2034), Alan Datema (2028), Herman Post (2031);

2.1.2.2 Substitute: Brad Schutten; Jeff Jans (in that order).

2.2 Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CPTPF):

2.2.1 The Guelph (Emmanuel) CanRC.

2.3 Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

2.3.1 Rev. Hendrik Alkema (2034), Stuart Boeve (2034), Rev. Gerrit Bruintjes (2034), Harry de Boer (2031), William Gortemaker (2034), Rev. Marc Jagt (2028), Dr. Karlo Janssen (2028) (Convener), Rev. Andrew Pol (2031), Henry Schouten (2028), Dr. Jeff Temple (2028), Rev. Steve Vandevelde (2028), Kasper VanVeen (2034).

2.4 Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP):

2.4.1 Chris de Boer (2031), Rev. Ryan Kampen (2031), Brian Vanderhout (2028), Carl Oosterhoff (2028), James Teitsma (2034), Rev. Rodney Vermeulen (2034) (Convener).

2.5 Committee on Bible Translations (CBT):

2.5.1 Rev. Jeff Poort (2028), Rev. Tyler VanderGaag (2031).

2.6 Committee for the Official Website (CWeb):

2.6.1 Reuel Feenstra (2034), Al Gortemaker (2031), Rev. Jeff Poort (2031) (Convener), Rosalyn Poort (2031).

2.7 Committee for Needy Students of Theology (CNST):

2.7.1 The Grassie (Covenant) CanRC.

2.8 Ad hoc Committee on Liturgical Forms:

2.8.1 Dr. Reuben Bredenhof (convener), Dr. Ben Faber, Rev. Tyler Vandergaag; Alternates – Raoul Kingma, Dr. Karen Dieleman.

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2.9 Ad hoc Committee to Propose Guidelines for Appeals at General Synod:

2.9.1 Rev. Jan DeGelder, Rev. Eric Kampen (convener), Harold Olij; Alternate – Rev. John VanWoudenberg.

2.10 Ad hoc Committee on GS Committees Complying with Church Order and Canadian tax law:

2.10.1 Dr. Karlo Janssen (convener), Kevin VanDelden, Oliver Hansma, Eric Vandergriendt.

2.11 Address Church:

2.11.1 The Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC.

2.12 Archiving Church:

2.12.1 The Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC.

2.13 Church to Inspect the Archives of General Synod:

2.13.1 The Burlington (Fellowship) CanRC.

2.14 General Fund:

2.14.1 The Carman East CanRC.

2.15 Financial Review of the General Fund:

2.15.1 The Carman West CanRC.

2.16 Churches for Days of Prayer ad CO Art. 54:

2.16.1 The Burlington Waterdown (Rehoboth) CanRC (and, once merged with the Burlington (Ebenezer) CanRC, the new combined church) and the Edmonton (Providence) CanRC.

2.17 Financial Review of GS 2025:

2.17.1 The Langley CanRC.

2.18 Committee for Publication of the Acts:

2.18.1 The first and second clerks of GS 2025.

2.19 Convening Church for the Next General Synod:

2.19.1 The Glanbrook (Trinity) CanRC.

**ADOPTED**

Synod returned to open session.

**Article 189 – Motions by the Clerks of GS 2025**

1. That the following decisions of GS 2025 be declared confidential Acts: Articles 105, 106, and 133.

**Ground:** Each of these deals with matters involving sensitive personal information that has never been made public and which, in view of the 9th commandment, ought not to be made public.

2. That the following decision of GS 2025 be declared a public act: Article 132 (Appeal re GS 2022 confidential acts).

**Ground:** Although this appeal references previous appeals about confidential matters, Willoughby Height's appeal deals strictly with procedural matters and does not contain information that would expose matters of confidence.

3. In line with a decision of GS 2007, GS 2025 confirms "the practice that inadmissible material will not be included in the archives of [general] synod" (*Acts of GS 2007*, art. 19).

## ADOPTED

### Article 190 – Sensitive Agenda Materials

A notice was read from the convening church to remind all delegates to destroy sensitive materials. Announcements were made regarding rides to airports.

### Article 191 – Concluding Matters

#### 1. Censure as per CO art. 34

1.1 The Chairman stated, with deep thankfulness to the Lord, that censure as per CO art. 34 was not needed. He gave thanks for the fact that a good spirit of brotherly cooperation was evidenced throughout Synod, even when opinions differed.

#### 2. Financial Matters

2.1 Synod members were reminded to submit their expenses to the treasurers appointed by the Convening Church.

#### 3. Adoption of the Final Articles of the Acts

3.1 Members of Synod were requested to review the *Acts* received and to forward any further corrections to the first clerk. The executive members of Synod will review and adopt the final articles of the *Acts*.

#### 4. Publication of Acts

4.1 It was noted that the first and second clerks had been appointed to prepare the *Acts of GS 2025* for publication. Synod allowed an official version of the acts to be made available on the website as soon as available. A copy of the *Confidential Acts* will be sent to each church, including a suggestion from the Second Clerk regarding how a consistory might deal with these *Acts*.

#### 5. Approval of Press Release

5.1 The press release will be prepared by the Vice-chairman and approved by the executive members of Synod for publication. For the text of the Press Release, see Appendix 24.

### Article 192 – Closing

1. The Chairman spoke some words in closing, expressing appreciation for the oneness in faith and for the deliberative nature of this synod. He reflected on some of the more significant decisions taken by this synod, such as those regarding the *Book of Praise* and the establishment of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK) and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC).

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2. He informed the meeting that as gift for the convening church the executive had commissioned a landscape painting by sr. Sheila VanDelft, a member of the Aldergrove CanRC. The painting will be of a south Aldergrove landscape expressing the unity, order, and spiritual direction of the churches as they were gathered here in Aldergrove. The painting is to be completed by mid-summer.
3. The Vice-chairman thanked the Chairman for his excellent service.
4. The Chairman read 2 Thessalonians 3:16, led in prayer and had the meeting sing the Doxology (Hymn 8).

*Thus General Synod 2025 was closed,  
for the agenda had become acta.*



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – Opening Address by Rev. R. Schouten

Text: Colossians 1:18 — “And he is the head of the body, the church.”

Brothers,

As we begin our work together this week, it’s good—essential, really—to pause and remember who the church belongs to. We all know the answer. But we need to hear it again: Christ is the head of the body, the church.

That means we’re not here to take control.

We’re not here to defend our turf or push our ideas.

We’re not even here to “represent” the church in some political sense.

We’re here because Christ still leads his church—and we want to follow him.

We’re not starting with motions or proposals. We’re starting with surrender.

We’re not gathered to assert ourselves, but to listen—together—for the voice of our Shepherd.

And Christ still leads his church—not by impressions or private insight, but by his clear and sufficient Word.

He speaks through the Scriptures, and by his Spirit he brings that Word to bear on our hearts, our minds, and our work.

He has not stepped back.

He hasn’t delegated the hard parts.

He hasn’t gone silent.

He’s present. And he reigns.

And that changes everything.

It means we don’t need to carry the weight of the church on our shoulders.

It’s not ours to fix or to preserve.

Our calling is simply to be faithful.

To pray.

To speak truthfully.

To listen carefully.

To submit ourselves—again and again—to what Christ has already said.

Synod isn’t about negotiating safe outcomes or building compromise coalitions.

It’s about seeking, humbly and honestly, the mind of Christ.

And when the church listens to his voice in Scripture and walks in his truth, that truth carries weight—not because we agreed on it, but because he made it known.

That’s what gives this week its weight, and its hope.

Yes, there are difficult matters ahead.

Yes, we’ll need wisdom, patience, even courage.

But we are not alone.

We are not in charge.

Christ is the Head.

He is still nourishing his body.

Still sanctifying her.

Still leading her with wisdom, power, and love.

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So as we begin this week, let's do so not with anxiety, and not with pride—but with deep gratitude, and a readiness to be led.

Christ is the head of the body, the church.

That's not just our confession.

That's our comfort, our compass, and our joy.

So let's take up the work before us with reverence, with humility, and with confidence—because our Head reigns.

## **Appendix 2 – Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK) - Address by Rev. Rik Douma**

Aldergrove, May 6th, 2025

Chairman, members of this Synod, and beloved brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

On behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches your Synod has just decided to adopt the recommendation of your Committee on Ecumenical Relations concerning a sister-church-relation with Gereformeerde Kerken settled in the Netherlands. On behalf of Reformed Churches, and our Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (BBK), I express gratitude, and pass on greetings from our churches.

It is something to be much thankful for, that you as Synod decided to accept our call to establish ecclesiastical fellowship with Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. And even decided to undertake a 'Category A' relationship with our churches. That looks to me to be a very green light.

In some sense this relation is new. For this ecclesiastical fellowship is with a bond of Reformed churches in the Netherlands that unified in October of last year. But in another sense this relationship continues what has been before. And, as you could imagine, there is heartfelt gratitude among those whom in the past have been on Canadian soil on behalf of Reformed churches in the Netherlands. Regarding that I willingly pass on warm greetings from Rev. Aalzen de Jager, whose name is familiar among the older generation in your churches. There was a sound ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the past. Sadly, those churches were hijacked by people with unbiblical stances on hermeneutics and ethics.

But our good and faithful Lord has preserved Reformed churches in the Netherlands. And, eventually, the historical bond between Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and Canadian Reformed Churches has not been broken. But it has been restored and re-established between us as an unbreakable fellowship of believers, Reformed brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is not by merit, but by free grace of the Lord that we have received this ecclesiastical fellowship with you. And because he has preserved us in the one catholic faith, we can relate our

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churches to the same foundation in Jesus by trusting and living His Word. And for that, we praise God from whom all blessings flow with thankfulness for this ecclesiastical fellowship.

Furthermore, what can we, as two (con)federations of churches, expect of this ecclesiastical fellowship? More than having a chair at the table of each other's Synod, more than enjoying hospitality of brothers and sisters in their homes and at their tables, more than those things is the blessing of sharing the cup of thanksgiving, when we have the opportunity to enjoy table fellowship at the table of the Lord in each other's churches.

Beside that, in what ways can we love and help each other as neighbours, while there is a geographical distance? Some have suggested that, for instance, nowadays it is far easier to collaborate regarding education. Specifically with regard to educating brothers for the ministry. To help training them by online courses or having offline experiences abroad. That might be something in which you can help our relatively small confederation of churches. That is, indeed, different in comparison to the past. Our ecclesiastical fellowship is equal in dignity, but not equal in resources compared to the past.

We do not feel ashamed of being in the minority, because the riches in which we both have an equal share is the gift of the Spirit of being faithful to Christ and His Word. And for the true love and faithfulness that springs from him, expressed by you towards Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, we thank God.

### **Appendix 3 – Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) - Letter by Rev. Graeme Craig**

Greetings from the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

Greetings in the blessed name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church.

I write on behalf of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) to convey to you the fraternal greetings of the FCC. Regrettably, we are not able to send a Delegate to attend your Synod meeting in Aldergrove BC in May this year. There had been hopes that we might have someone in Western Canada at the time who would be able to represent us, but this is now not the case. Please be assured that our absence at this time is not due to any lack of interest in the CanRef. Whist distance means that our contacts are limited, we appreciate the ability to encourage one another in the Gospel, and your steadfast adherence to the historic confessions of the Reformation. In a day of decline in the Dutch-speaking Churches, with the embracing of a false hermeneutic, the acceptance of the error of women's ordination and the toleration of homosexual relationships within the professing body of Christ, we are thankful that you have remained firm in your commitment to Biblical principles and practice. May the Lord keep us faithful in dark and difficult days. Thus, although labouring in another part of the world, we are labourers together with you in the bonds of the Gospel.

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As you will be aware, Scotland is in a dreadful state spiritually. Secularism has overwhelmed us and we are a nation in rebellion against God, led by leaders who do not know their right hand from their left. This is exemplified in the promotion of ungodly and harmful sexual ideologies, attempts to legislate for called “assisted dying” which appear to be having success, and threats to free speech and the promotion of the Gospel through proposed “conversion-therapy bans”. How we need the Lord to pray that there may yet be a turning of the tide and a return to the Gospel of our blessed Lord.

As a Church we are struggling with a lack of manpower, though are thankful that we have men from the UK, and also from France, Spain and the USA who are training for the Ministry. While on the home front we struggle to maintain our witness, we have encouragements overseas. The USA Presbytery, largely based in the south and south-east is growing in strength, with people being drawn to a robust confessionalism, simple, biblical worship, and preaching which is experimental as well as evangelistic. It would not be surprising if they were able to become a sister denomination of their own in the near future. The work in Spain, France and Portugal prospers with ministers in each country and 6 preaching places. There is also the mission work in Sri Lanka. This grows from strength to strength and with an increasing number of preaching stations and people wishing to gain theological training. Additionally, in God’s providence, a Congregation in Nobleford, Alberta has come into being. A group of believers initiated this work and subsequently approached the FCC for support, believing that it was here they fitted in the best. This unsought for development may be a means of increased contacts between our Churches given that it bring us geographically closer to one another.

While the encouragements overseas may not be reflected in Scotland, we seek to battle on, remaining faithful to the position of the Scottish Reformation and the heirs of the Disruption. We have need of prayer that the Lord would supply our need and return the land of Knox and “the book” back to himself.

May the Lord bless the work of the Canadian Reformed Churches and use you for his glory.

With warm Christian greetings,

Yours sincerely,



Graeme Craig

Clerk to the Ecumenical Relations Committee  
& Principal Clerk of Assembly

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**Appendix 4 – Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI) – Address by Rev. Yonson Dethan**

Esteemed brothers,

First of all, let me glorify our triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for his love, protection, and care that I might be here being with you in this synod.

Secondly, on behalf of our federation the Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia, I would like to thank you for your invitation that I may come here on behalf of our federation. We would like to give our Christian greetings to you all from our brothers and sisters of our federation to you all. We hope and pray that your synod might go well, that the Lord may grant you wisdom, that you can collect wisdom and decide with a biblical decision to build the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to thank Mr. Chairman and also all of you that we all have fifteen minutes to give the speech. Why I say this is because sitting in the chairs I got sleepy. We don't say anything, we just listen to you, so now talking longer makes me wake up. Please forgive me if I talk a bit longer here because of jetlag, it is hard for us to stay awake. I was in committee two, I got sleepy, I thought "what should I do? I was hoping I could talk but I cannot talk." Once at the end of talking I clapped my hands just to wake me up because of the jetlag I guess, as now in Indonesia it is morning time, so it is hard for me to stay awake.

Let me continue a bit about our federation. Maybe some of you already read the report from your committee. Our federation was established in 1950, and since then we have grown in Reformed practice but we live in the middle of Muslim country. As you know, Indonesia is the largest Muslim country with close to 300 million people. So it is not easy for us to bring the gospel there, but we try our best to bring the Reformed teaching in our country. Recently, we are reaching out to people in Java—maybe some of you know that Java Island has 150 million people there. In my place that I'm working, it's called East Java. Just in 1 state we have 50 million, so that state on its own has a larger population than your whole country! So Indonesia is such a big mission field that is good to reach out.

Being in your midst here, I would like to share with you our struggles and our war so that you may know. As sister churches, we are supposed to help each other and not only with prayer. I wonder if we could hold hands together. We have been sister churches since 2019—I remember I was there in Alberta, in Edmonton. But I wonder what should we work on together, specifically in mission area. We are so happy that you send your delegations, Dr. Andrew Pol came to our synod recently and before, and then Rev. Henry Versteeg also came over to attend at our synod, and we are so happy for that. But I wonder if we should do more than just attending each other's synods, praying for each other—think the kingdom of God should be more than that. So I would like to address you to please also think together on this question: "how can we work together as sister churches?"

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We are doing mission work in the island of Java, also in the island of Sempu, the island of Timor. As you know, Indonesia has about 17 thousand islands. These many islands have more than 700 languages. But even though we have so many islands and languages, we would still like to reach those people, specifically the Muslims and the pagans. I come from a family in which my father was the first generation to come to faith, and we are the second generation. But even though we are still a young church, we still desire to bring the gospel to reach the Indonesian peoples. So I wonder if it is possible that your federation and our federation should put in time together to reach those Indonesians. And maybe you can learn from us as well. I read in the news that there are a lot of Muslims coming from the Middle East to your country here. Maybe you can learn from us, or maybe we can do the work together. I do not know, you will decide that, but I would like you to please give some time to work together for the kingdom of God.

I would also like to share with you my happiness because working in Indonesia is not easy. I just recently had some problems with a Muslim family because of reaching out to some students that come to our church. Because those students came to faith, and we were planning to baptize them, their family didn't like this at all and so they are now looking for me. They are threatening to do something. So we can't administer the baptism because of that tension. But that's just one example of the situations that we are facing.

You know, sometimes we as Reformed, we fight so much in our church order things, and church politics, sometimes I think that it's sad if we fight too much on church politics but we miss the most important thing which is: bringing the gospel to the unbelievers and Muslims. I mention this because you might know in the report from your committee about our relationship with some of your church here that established the mission church in West Timor. There are some tensions that we are facing which, for me, is just wasting time. Because the most important is reaching out to people. So now I think that I have a golden opportunity in my speech to address you to please pray and please think together, "what is the focus of being sister churches?" I think the purpose is that we hold hands together and, if anything is wrong, let us sit down, talk together, find the solution, forgive each other, and let's continue to work!

I do not need to tell you in detail because that is not proper, but I think that you know in the report that we should think together and find the solution together so that we can show to the world, specifically to the Muslim people, the good witness of bringing the gospel. Specifically as Reformed brothers and sisters, we show to the people we Reformed people have lots of love, have lots of forgiveness, we have lots of peace. I think that is the most important for being sister churches.

The next thing I would like to also thank you for is to come to us to attend our next synod. We are going to hold our synod this year as well in the month of October. If possible, please send your delegation to come to our synod. But please, if when your delegation comes, let's try to talk to together in a brotherly way to find the solution, and please, maybe we can talk together about how to win the Indonesians—hopefully, if you can agree with that. I would like you to please

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think about spending more time to reach more people together in our country, because we are just small federations. But we love to do the work, and we would love to work together with you.

By saying that I would like to invite you to please come to our synod in October. The GGRI, our sister church, is going to hold a synod in October as well (Oct 21-25), so in order to save you time we are going to hold our synod shortly after that. So, if you send your delegation just one time you can attend two synods.

As a delegate, I am so happy to come not only to see you all here but like my brother Rev. Carl Van Dam mentioned, we were in theological seminary together. I counted almost 30 years, right Carl? So 30 years is a long time, like we already feel old, so I am so happy I can see all my colleagues here, Rev. Carl Van Dam, Rev. Karlo Janssen, and so many more.

But for me, it's wonderful to see you. When I graduated from the Theological College in Hamilton, I never thought I would be coming here to see my friends, because coming from a poor country it is hard to fly. But God is so amazing. Now I'm here! I get to see my friends and you all, and we can enjoy fellowship together. I do not want to forget something. Rev. Douma [of the Reformed Churches, (The Netherlands)], three years ago at our synod we terminated our relationship with your old federation (GKv) as well because of the women in the office and those kind of developments. But now seeing you come here, and seeing the Canadian Reformed Churches accept you as sister churches, is good news for us too, and I will tell our brothers and sisters about this good news.

So thank you so much for giving us this example, and I saw that Mr. Chairman looked at me so I am going to finish my speech. Finally I'd like to thank you all for this, and may the Lord bless you richly, and that the synod may go well, and that you may make good, great, wonderful, biblical decisions to build the church of God.

Let me finish this speech by giving you the word of God from Romans chapter 11:36: "From him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen." Thank you.

#### **Appendix 5 – Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) - Address by Rev. Travis Grassmid**

Esteemed fathers and brothers of the Canadian Reformed Churches,

It is with joy that I bring to your assembly the greetings from your brethren of the Reformed Church in the United States. How precious it is to enjoy the sweet fellowship of believers, members of one church, redeemed through the blood of our precious Savior Jesus Christ.

As the Holy Spirit through His servant David so beautifully speaks in the 133<sup>rd</sup> Psalm:

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*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing—Life forevermore.*

It was with admiration and a certain amount of awe that I perused the thousands of pages of documents pertaining to this General Synod! It is evident that you are committed to conducting the ministry of the church in an honest, respectful, honorable and workmanlike manner; as you serve the Lord, and His people. You stand as a beautiful example of the faithful work of the church. We are privileged to share a fraternal church relationship with you all. Thank you.

As our names suggest, although we share one faith, we are largely divided by a border, although with a couple of notable exceptions. Yet that border should not, and does not, extend to dividing the Christian unity which our two bodies enjoy. For example, we have been blessed by the regular contact which your brother Will Gortemaker has fostered with our Inter-Church Relations Committee. Additionally, recently we have been able to communicate with members of this body concerning the development of a denominational songbook; we were encouraged and humbled at the thoughtfulness of reaching out to your fraternal denominations and seeking advice. That stands as a good example of how we can be a blessing to one another.

By way of regular communication between committees and the Christian fellowship which is fostered by rubbing elbows with one another at Classis and Synod meetings, the natural result of growing trust between our churches is becoming evident. I know that there have been a couple occasions of inviting ministers from one another's pulpits to lead worship, and we should probably encourage more of this in the future where feasible. In these simple ways, not only the officers of the church, but also the members of our churches grow in our trust and love for one another.

2025 is a big year for the RCUS as we are celebrating 300 years of God's faithfulness towards us. In anticipation of this milestone, we have added family events to coincide with synod so that we can unite in praising God for His faithfulness to His church. So as to better accommodate this celebration, we have moved the convening of synod to the second week of June, combined with concurrently hosting celebratory events for the whole family in Rapid City, South Dakota.

I recognize that you all are committed to meeting until business concludes and I understand that this could take two to three weeks; but this year the RCUS has committed to an abbreviated synod meeting. It is our stated desire to conduct the necessary work of synod in a three-day session. In order to accomplish this goal, the Standing Committees of Synod, although not officially constituted until synod begins, are still being encouraged to conduct as much of their preliminary work in these weeks leading up to synod, so as to streamline the business of synod once we are constituted.

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I commend this body for your careful attention to detail and for the orderly manner in which business is conducted. You have a large docket of business, but it is the business to which God has called you, and for the care and nurture of His church. As such, we will keep you in prayer, and seek to be an encouragement to you as you faithfully conduct your business. Thank you so very much for the wonderful hospitality which you have shown; from being picked up from the airport, to the friendly hosts whom we enjoy for the week, to the fellowship, discussions and provision here at the synod location. You are very gracious to your guests, and we pray that we can likewise reflect our appreciation for you all as we enjoy the presence of your delegates to our upcoming synod meetings.

May God continue to bless this convening of General Synod Aldergrove 2025, as you labor faithfully for our glorious Lord.

In Christ,  
Travis Grassmid,  
For the Reformed Church in the United States.

#### **Appendix 6 – Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) - Address by Rev. David Stares**

*Tēnā koutou kātoa, e mihi ana ki a koutou i tēnei hui, he hui tino hirahira.*

Greetings to you all. It is a privilege to be here and to address this very important assembly.

I bring warm greetings from your sister churches and from your brothers and sisters in Christ in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. As the brother who introduced me kindly mentioned, my name is David Stares, and I serve as the pastor of the Reformed Church of Masterton, who send you their greetings as well.

Although I've been in New Zealand for several years now, I was born and raised in St. Catharines, Ontario, and I spent most of my youth at Trinity United Reformed Church. I hope you won't hold that against me!

As I stand here today, I do so as the third representative of the RCNZ to attend a synod of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches since the formal beginning of our sister-church relationship in 2007.

So, who are we?

For those who may not be familiar with our churches: the Reformed Churches of New Zealand began in 1953 with just three congregations. We are founded on the Three Forms of Unity—the

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Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort—and we later adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith as well.

Today, we are 22 instituted churches, along with several church plants, totaling around 3,600 professing and baptized members.

The relationship between our churches had its start in 2002, when a little rural church in New Zealand—my own congregation, the Reformed Church of Masterton—brought an overture to Synod suggesting we pursue a sister-church relationship with the CanRC. That overture was approved, and you graciously reciprocated in 2007, officially establishing the bond we now enjoy.

Since then, we've worked together in various areas, most notably in Papua New Guinea. We are thankful that the Lord continues to bless this mission. The work being done through the Reformed Churches Bible College is bearing fruit, not only in the lives of the students, but also in the growth of local congregations on the ground. This is good gospel work—and we are privileged to be co-labourers with you in it.

We were also very grateful for the presence of Rev. Jan de Gelder at our most recent synod, and for the gracious and encouraging words he shared. Personally, we in Masterton were especially thankful that he took the time to lead services in our congregation.

Our pulpits are regularly blessed by visiting ministers from your churches. My congregation remembers well Rev. Jack Moesker and Rev. John Ludwig, no doubt among others across your churches.

We have also been enriched by the ministry of two graduates of your seminary: Rev. Matthias Schatt, who was ordained in Bishopdale (Christchurch) in November 2023, and Rev. Kevin Star, ordained in North Shore (Auckland) in November 2024.

But the benefits of our relationship extend far beyond the pulpit.

For a variety of reasons, New Zealand has become a bit of a destination, and it's not uncommon to find former members of your churches among us—some visiting, others settling permanently. In these cases, we see one of the most tangible blessings of a sister-church relationship: that families and consistories can have confidence knowing that their loved ones are being shepherded in a faithful church across the globe. That parents can rest assured their children and grandchildren are leaving for a sister church is no small comfort. A comfort shared when our members come to you and yours come to us.

But there's an even greater reason, isn't there?

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When our Lord Jesus gave his commission, it was a command that knows no borders. It isn't the Canadian Commission, or the American Commission, or even the Kiwi Commission. It is the Great Commission. And as we seek to fulfill it, we go out—not alone—but together.

As Paul writes in Philippians 1:27, we are “striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.” In Matthew 9:36–38, we read: “When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’”

These words were true in Jesus' day, and they remain just as true in ours. We in the RCNZ pray for you, and we ask that you would also pray for us—because we both want to see Christ proclaimed in every corner of this world.

And it is a delight to him and a blessing from him when brothers dwell in unity.

For all these reasons we are eager to maintain and deepen our relationship with the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

And so I leave you with this blessing from Hebrews 13:20–21: “Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

#### **Appendix 7 – Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) - Address by Rev. Robert E. Tarullo**

Mr. Chairman, Fathers and Brothers,

It is a pleasure to bring you greetings from your brethren of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church: grace to you and peace in the faithful, sovereign, and all powerful name of our resurrected, exalted, and reigning Savior Christ Jesus the King.

The apostle John records for us Jesus' high priestly prayer wherein the unity that the church has in Christ would be more and more expressed and made manifest in her earthly activities. David sings of “how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.” But Paul suggests that this unity that we have, that we know is good and pleasant, is also hard to maintain, when he says, “be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” To that end, we are so very thankful for the way the Lord has blessed us with over two decades of shared commitment to the whole counsel of the Word of God. The Lord has blessed us in our co-laboring with you through the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) and the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), which includes a shared commitment, with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, of visiting the Korean Presbyterian Church Kosin every three

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years. And we look forward to how the Lord might open other opportunities for us to serve side-by-side in the work of gospel ministry.

Our next general assembly is scheduled for June 4–10, 2025, at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, just outside of Chicago. The agenda contains several administrative and judicial appeals, as well as the report of a special study committee on Criminal History and Officer Qualifications.

By way of updates from our last assembly, the General Assembly of the OPC met with a full agenda in June of 2024 in Seattle, Washington. Some items of interest include:

1. We received the Report of the Special Committee to Help Equip Officers to Protect the Flock. Erected by our assembly a few years ago, it deals with matters related to how the church might better protect the church from sexual predators and domestic violence.
2. We dealt with one judicial appeal and nine complaints on appeal.
3. Our foreign missionary endeavors include sending missionaries to Asia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Uganda, Ukraine, and Uruguay. There is now a greater emphasis on the Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps where we seek to train up church leaders in the Reformed faith in various parts of the world, including in Austria/Switzerland, Colombia, Hungary, India, and South Sudan. We also have a new key role called the Regional Foreign Missionary whose work is broad and focused on making contacts in a particular region of the world. At this point, we have one Regional Foreign Missionary in Africa making contacts throughout Africa to help determine how we might serve the broader church. The OPC continues to seek additional missionaries. Our Committee on Foreign Missions described our current fields as “severely understaffed.” Pray for the Lord to raise up men from within and outside of the OPC to fill this urgent need.
4. Our Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension provided financial support for thirty-six “fields”: ten new mission works, twenty continuing mission works, four church planting interns, and two special evangelistic projects.
5. The Committee on Diaconal Ministries remains active leading the ministry of mercy within the OPC and internationally, as well as providing training tools for local deacons.
6. As well, through the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations, the OPC invited the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe into our closest ecumenical relationship, Ecclesiastical Fellowship. We are currently in Ecclesiastical Fellowship with twenty-one churches, including you, corresponding relations with twelve churches, and Ecumenical Contact with fifteen churches.
7. You may also be interested in learning about some of the resources through our Committee on Ministerial Care available to the OPC (subjects like sabbaticals, pastoral burnout, pastor/wife retreats, pastors’ wives conferences, and several white papers on a variety of subjects pertinent to pastoral well-being), which are also useful to others as well. You can find out more about them at [OPC.org](http://OPC.org).
8. Additionally, our Statistician reported that as of the end of 2023, the OPC now has 17 presbyteries, 305 congregations, and 36 mission works. We saw a modest 2.75% increase in overall membership to a little more than 33,320 members. Slow and steady, by his grace, the Lord continues to build his church, and we’re thankful to be a part of that work.

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Thank you for your faithful labors for Christ's church. I have delighted in the fellowship through conversations and devotions with you. I am so appreciative of your deliberative care for each subject under consideration. We are so thankful for your faithfulness evident here at this General Synod. Let us pray together to the end that we "...be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It's for Christ's church to remember that "there is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

May the Lord bless you and keep you in your continued deliberations throughout this synod, may his face of favor shine upon you and bless you with the bond of peace in Christ, our one Lord.

Thank you and may God's grace and peace remain on you.

Rev. Robert E. Tarullo  
Member of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations,  
Pastor Westminster OPC, Countryside, Illinois

**Appendix 8 – United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) - Address by Rev. Jason Vanderhorst**

Thank you for having me here, it's a privilege to address you on behalf of the United Reformed Churches. Certainly I do feel very at home here given some of that background that you just heard by the brother who introduced me, but you also have made me feel very welcome here along with all the other fraternal delegates, so thank you for the warm welcome and the way you've allowed us to participate so far this week. I've been impressed with your thoroughness, somewhat overwhelmed by amount of written material put before you in comparison to what we see—different ways of doing things. And I've been impressed so far in the tone in which you've addressed one another and have been encouraged by that this week.

I will just say a few words here at the beginning regarding the state of our relationship.

By God's grace, there is a lot to be thankful for within the URCNA, although just like any other church body, we have congregations that are struggling, we certainly have many that are thriving, and we praise God for that. One happy example of a church in my mind is Ascension Reformed Church in Cincinnati Ohio, which has planted more than one church since they were a church plant themselves not all that long ago, and they hope to actually have an Ohio river valley classis come out of classis eastern US. That is their prayer, and they are working towards that, so that will be a happy situation in our federation.

Our recent synod was largely uneventful in the best sense of that word. Study committees completed two reports and those were adopted for pastoral advice, and I think many of you know

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that, but that was probably the most notable thing that came out of it. So we now have a report, a pastoral advice, on digital media and worship, and also one on human sexuality.

So had I been addressing today a lesser-known body, I would probably give more background. I have done that in different contexts, but we have much history that is shared together, we are known to one another, and increasingly we are aware—even involved in—each other's mission endeavours, we read each other's periodicals and combine for events, and we even intermarry!

At NAPARC (I have the privilege of attending NAPARC), what we do there is kind of like a family reunion. All the different denominations come, and we have these meetings. The heart of the NAPARC meeting is the bilateral meetings where one denomination or federation meets with another. When we as URC meet with people, it kind of feels like a bunch of cousins getting together. But when the URCNA meets with the Canadian Reformed committee members, it feels like brothers meeting together. There is a closeness that is not quite there on any other level. Incidentally, I think that helps begin to answer the concern that the church at Tintern brought up in a communication to you, but I'll save that for a later time otherwise.

But the question that is before us is “now what?” That’s a question before us because of our mandate as a committee, it says that “with a view toward complete unity” we do our work. Different members respond to this differently within our churches, but that mandate indicates that we are not satisfied with where we are at, and so we have you in phase 2 relationship with us, but “phase” suggests that there is further growth and development that may be possible. So we do rejoice in all that we have together that is good, but still that question remains, “Now what?”

This impulse is rooted in Scripture, in the prayer of Jesus in John 17. Jesus prays to the Father: “that they may be one, even as we are one,” and also he says “that they may become perfectly one.” So this has been debated as to whether this means a call to full organizational unity, but I actually think that is of no consequence, because regardless of where we will end up, the ecumenical imperative here is clear: we are to be as united as possible. So whether that’s organizationally united in a formal way, or organically united through our relationships. That is the case.

Your year-end *Clarion* included a well-written, I thought, “state of the union” article, as it was called, that emphasized unity without uniformity. We in the United Reformed Churches are eager to see what this line of thinking means for the decisions that you will make here, and also for the short and medium term future of your churches. I can testify from much experience in the Fraser Valley that the Canadian Reformed churches here are not uniform in their approach to the worship service and the various circumstances within it. And yet the elements are there. Your confessional statements, our forms of unity, helpfully grounding, and guarding, and guiding orthodox thinking and practice within the churches. So that is true for your churches, but what is true for your churches and how you relate with one another is also true of our two federations. For while we are not the same in every expression of doctrine and practice, the core tenants of Christianity are the same, and not only that, of course, but also the particular Reformed

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understandings of those tenants. So yes we do have some different emphases, whether that is to do with covenant, or preaching, or the sacraments, and these are important to be aware of and discuss, but we hold together to the Three Forms of Unity, and so we share that same ground, guard, and guide, as we seek to faithfully follow God's Word.

So having affirmed this, what is the way forward? Now what? That question still sits there. What remains in the way of full organizational unity?

We have been finding out as an interchurch committee within the URC that at NAPARC we've hit a wall with many federations and denominations. It is not that our work is unfruitful, because it is fruitful, a good example of that is the stimulating conversations we've had with the Heritage Reformed Churches about the nature of experiential preaching. And we are building trust and appreciation with them but we are who we are, they are who they are, and you are who you are, and you can say the same about the RCUS, the PCA, the OPC, the ERQ, and so on.

We have discussed revisiting the dream of NAPARC functioning as a super synod as it were, with certain matters in common discussed in a more robust and consequential way. The reaction to our feelers that we've put out to that have been lukewarm at best. We know that there is a lot of work to do if there is to be any progress in that direction. But barring something like that, barring progress in an effort like this for more organizational unity, what other progress could be made?

Well I think John 17 indicates two areas that we would do well to give our energies to as United Reformed Churches and Canadian Reformed Churches together. And I think that if we were to grow in these respects it would be a real indicator of progress. So the first is grow in the truth. This is Jesus' prayer to the Father in verse 17, he says, "Sanctify them in the truth." So what is the truth? Well it is God's Word, that we use God's Word, we confess God's Word, we believe that we preach God's Word and teach what is in accord with sound doctrine, the truth. Yet we can always be sanctified further, can't we?

Sanctification is progressive, that's the nature of it, it's an ongoing work that will only be complete when we are in glory. So there are areas where the URC can grow in a greater understanding and application of the truth. And there are areas where the CanRC can grow in greater understanding and application of the truth. So may we grow in our ability to point these things out to one another, I think that can be one of our areas of focus, so that where we are particularly strong in the truth, we intentionally make an effort to encourage one another in this and celebrate this with one another. Not so that we can pat ourselves on the back (it is not about that), and make ourselves feel good, but so that we can acknowledge one another to the praise and honour of God.

So perhaps from your part this would look like increased, specific engagement with the URC doctrinal affirmations and pastoral advice papers. We were encouraged by your recent meeting of Regional Synod West which did just this as they interacted with our two most recent study

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committee reports that I just mentioned, and that was an encouragement to us. But we have also noted that, historically, your committee has been hesitant to speak on behalf of your churches, no doubt there is some wisdom in this, but with that notwithstanding perhaps it would be worth stretching yourselves in this respect for the sake of our inquiring minds.

So increased attention to the truth will serve the purpose of uniting further, that was the first thing: Grow in the truth.

The second thing is from John 17, that we would grow in love. This is also Jesus' prayer, it's throughout that chapter, the ground of the relationship within the Trinity, so the ground of God's relationship with us is love. And so he says, Jesus does, in verse 26, may "the love with which you have loved me... be in them."

Now we do have a great love, there is a great love among many members and churches within our respective federations. I can just think of how at Synod Escondido your primary representative expressed his love for us to the synod in no uncertain terms. And then I went up there to respond with him, and we had a massive bear hug, two very tall men, hugging in front of our synod, and that is symbolic of the love we share. The love is real between us.

Could that love be deepened? I think so. Over time, of course, that can happen. Continued positive experience grows us in love, but intentionally we can do this. We can take great effort to speak of each other's practices more positively. There is one example where we can improve on this from both sides is in relation to music, which of course is a notable topic at this synod.

I have not defended the Genevan tunes so much as when I left the Canadian Reformed churches. I have defended them so often in the latter part of my life here. I've heard many URC people speak poorly of the Genevan tunes. Whether they are easy or hard, familiar or unfamiliar, our preference or not—is it helpful when a URC person does that and puts them down? Is that the most loving way to interact with our CanRC brothers and sisters? I think we have room to grow in this.

Canadian Reformed people have, by and large, responded very positively to the TPH, and of course us in the URC and the OPC are gratified to hear that, yet there does continue to be an element of looking down on the book for how many hymns it has, and also for it's lack of "Book of Praise-ness"—you know what I mean—as if no songbook can match the high level attained by the *Book of Praise*. So I would humbly ask you, is this helpful? Is this most loving?

As I conclude, thank you for the time that you've given me. In your CER's report, it states this: "URCNA Synod Escondido 2024 entertained a recommendation from CERCU to set aside funds in order to remove financial hinderances for the pulpit exchanges between distant URC and CanRC. For various reasons the recommendation was not adopted." Our committee was quite disappointed in this. We thought this was going to be a really helpful step to work towards bridging that gap where we have not experienced each other because we are so far apart from

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each other, but our synod did not decide to put funds toward that. Looking at that it shows us that we have a lot of work to do. Nevertheless, we are thankful for our relationship with you. The CanRC is dear to many of our ministers and our members, and we know and feel that this is mutual on your part. So may God work in us by His Spirit to draw us closer together in truth and in love, so that also the minority of people who are less warm to the relationship would grow in understanding, appreciation, affinity, and unity. I say this with optimism, hopeful optimism, for the Spirit is at work in our federations, and the Holy Spirit bears the fruit of love.

As we are rooted in Christ, this is the case. Verse 26: “May the love with which you have loved me . . . be in them, and I in them” is how Jesus prays. So beloved brother delegates, our prayer for you and your churches is that you may be Christ-centered, not culture-centered, not outreach-centered, not even merely Word-centered, but Christ-centered. And as you are uncompromisingly centered on him, you will be relevant in the culture we live in. As you are firmly fixed on him, you will understand the Word and apply it well. And as you are deeply rooted in him, you will be faithful and fruitful in all your missional endeavours. For in him, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found. So may God bless you richly, in Christ!

#### **Appendix 9 – Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) – Address by Rev. Blaise Désiré Tsabang Fomena**

Dear beloved and esteemed brothers in Christ,

My name is Blaise Tsabang. I know a few people in this room given my participation at two NAPARC Assemblies in the past years. For the majority who do not know me, I am pastor in Église Réformée de la Rive-Sud (ERRS), one of the five churches of the Église réformée du Québec (ERQ). The ERQ Inter-church Relations Committee appointed me to represent our churches and say a few words on their behalf.

In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, receive the warm fraternal greetings from your French-speaking brothers and sisters. It is a great privilege and honor to be in your midst to attend this 2025 General Synod of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches here in Aldergrove.

We are thankful for this opportunity to enjoy Christian fellowship, hear reports of the Lord’s work in your midst, and to pray with and for one another. We are happy to walk along with sisters churches who do not tamper with the Word of God; with brothers who are courageous to put an end to a fraternal relationship when the other party does not display a high view of the Scriptures and who at the same time are honest to reconsider the case when new information comes in.

As you know already, the Église réformée du Québec (ERQ) is the only French-speaking confessional witness in the province of Quebec. The ERQ pastors and elders subscribe to the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith. They frequently use the Canons

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of Dort and the Belgic Confession in their sermon preparation as well. The ERQ is composed of 350 souls worshiping in five local congregations. While we are very small, the Scriptures remind us that as we gather before the throne of God and of the Lamb, we are a part of that “great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.” (Revelation 7:9) What a glorious comfort which fills our hearts with joy!

We thank our gracious God for this opportunity to address your synod and to update you on the latest developments so that you might actively intercede for the Lord’s work in our midst. As we receive news about your churches, we will inform our synod and encourage our churches to pray for the Spirit’s blessing upon your kingdom service.

The Lord of the Church is raising up new workers for the harvest. I, your servant, Blaise Tsabang, was called and ordained to serve the Église réformée de la Rive-Sud (Charny) in 2021 after 3 years training at Farel Institute in Montreal. In the recent period, we have been blessed by a significant growth since our membership went from 64 members including infants to 112, a growth that comes along with some challenges as well (just to name a few, calling new men to the office of Elder and Deacon, finding a bigger sanctuary to sit all the members and visitors each Sunday). Fortunately, Farel Institute is selling the building where we worship, and we are in the process of acquiring it and making some renovations to meet our current needs.

A year ago, we celebrated the ordination of our brother Christian Cruchet. Rev. Cruchet was trained at the Faculté Jean Calvin in France. After completing a two-year internship at the St. Georges church, the congregation called him as their next pastor. Pastors Mario Veilleux and Paulin Bédard, who are members of the same church, continue to serve the ERQ churches as they enter their retirement years.

Our greatest need is for more men to be called to the ministry. Besides pastors Veilleux and Bédard, our brothers Patrice Michaud and John Zoellner are also semi-retired, even as they regularly preach and serve their local congregations.

We have also experienced the departures of younger pastors. Rev. Karis Mpindi, who served the Église réformée St-Jean (Montreal) for nearly a decade, returned to Grand Rapids, Michigan where he is pursuing a doctoral degree at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. Lord willing, brother Mpindi will take up his father’s work, teaching at a seminary in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In another situation, Rev. Ben Westerveld stepped down from the pastoral ministry of the Église réformée St-Marc (Quebec City) to serve as director and professor of Farel, the institute of Reformed theology serving Quebec province.

On a sadder note, after serving the St-Paul congregation (Repentigny) for 5 years, Rev. Olivier Imbernon left the ERQ to plant a church associated with Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC).

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These are difficult times in the ERQ. In addition to these departures, the ERQ has experienced and continues to experience several tensions, particularly in interpersonal relations: between elders and pastors; between consistories and congregations; between church members. Some difficult decisions have had to be made, involving long discussions. We covet your prayers for compassionate understanding, mutual forgiveness, and brotherly reconciliation. Pray that our heavenly Father would “deliver us from evil”—from the evil one and his attacks against his people.

At present, three of the five ERQ congregations are vacant. Of the five students associated with Farel, none are actively pursuing the pastoral ministry. There is a crying need for pastors. Our Lord and Saviour reminded us that the harvest is great, but the labourers are few. Admittedly, in Quebec, the harvest is no “bumper crop.” Very few individuals demonstrate interest in the gospel, and all too many covenant children wander from the faith. The harvesting requires intense pastoral labour. We need many faithful, zealous, loving labourers. Please join us, brothers, in obeying the Lord’s exhortation: “Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Luke 10:2.)

On a more positive note, we do praise our Lord for the work of his grace in the lives of his people. During the restrictions related to the COVID epidemic and afterwards, we have received new converts into our churches. Covenant children have made profession of faith, are getting married, and bearing a new generation of covenant children. We are particularly thankful for the addition of many immigrant believers to our churches. Our congregations are colourful, including brothers and sisters from Cameroun, Congo, Colombia, Brazil, Madagascar, Quebec, the United States, France, Germany, Switzerland, etc. We are thankful for this foretaste of the multitude without number before the throne of God and the Lamb, coming from every nation, tribe, language and people.

We also give thanks to our Lord for the growing interest in Reformed theology beyond the walls of our churches. In November 2024, we celebrated the launch of the Reformation Study Bible in the French language, a translation project underwritten by Ligonier Ministries. The Montreal event attracted more than 400 believers from a wide variety of churches. The Reformation Study Bible sold out in three months! Furthermore, the Reformed courses taught by Farel regularly receive students from Baptists and Pentecostal assemblies.

With respect to the spread of Reformed teaching, we should most certainly mention Ressources chrétiennes. This online French language library of Reformed literature is associated with your Reformation Study Center in South Africa. Rev. Paulin Bédard continues to direct and oversee this ministry which includes nearly 8,000 articles which believers throughout the French-speaking world can easily research, consult and download in PDF format. Please extend our sincere thanks for the prayers and financial support of your churches.

Your synods have repeatedly encouraged “the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects.” However, we would bring to your attention that offerings taken to support the ERQ synod and our local congregations has

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significantly declined in the past ten years. The Reformed mission in Quebec is an expensive endeavor. Congregations can barely pay their own pastors, let alone their building rentals. We would encourage your deacons to prayerfully consider adding the ERQ to their regular offerings schedule.

We pray for the Lord's blessing upon your synod, its deliberations and its decisions. We also pray for a blessing upon your fellowship as brothers of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

With brotherly affection,

Rev. Blaise Désiré Tsabang Fomena

**Appendix 10 – Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) - Address by Rev. Aaron De Boer**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the privilege of addressing General Synod Aldergrove and for the warm fellowship among you this week.

Fathers and brothers, on behalf of my fellow ministers and elders in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Synod, I bring you greetings in the name of *the* Minister of the Great Congregation, he who is “not ashamed to call [us]...brothers,” we great you the name of Jesus Christ, the LORD, our Savior and King!

My name is Aaron De Boer, minister of the gospel at the lone ARP congregation in Washington state, Bethany ARP, just about thirty miles Southeast of here in the Mount Baker foothills. I represent a unique area of ARP proximity to the Canadian Reformed Churches, a short drive from Lynden, Nooksack Valley, and the congregations of Lower Mainland, BC, as well as an effort to reach into parts of the Pacific Northwest which still do not have the Reformed witness, and God willing, plant a presbytery in days to come.

We want to thank you for your earnest investment in getting to know and establish a bond of trust with the ARP. We thank you for sending your emissaries the Rev. Dr. Jeff Temple and Rev. Gerrit Bruijntjes to our beloved Bonclarken Retreat Center in the North Carolina mountains now several times. I have to say that Jeff has been your faithful mouthpiece; we have truly come to love Jeff for his expressions of Christian affection, genuine spiritual unity shared among serious Reformed believers, and we have come to love his unique sense of humor, that he does not hold back in his formal addresses! It is possible, that the brothers of the ARP have come to believe that all CanRCs are...just like Jeff Temple!... And so, they love all of you, very much!

We praise God who by His Word and Spirit has preserved you and preserved the witness of your distinctly Reformed faith and practice in an increasingly hostile land. Be encouraged as pilgrims, for “the steadfast love of the LORD endures forever!”

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Our synod has experienced of late the mixture of the Christian life, of both great joy and also burdens. We thank you for remembering us in your prayers.

At our last synod we considered a study report initiated by our own Canadian Presbytery as they had observed a steady presence of secret societies like the Freemasons intruding into the household and family of God. After considering the report, much of which included wisdom mined from other NAPARC churches, the 220th General Synod succinctly declared that Freemasonry is incompatible with Christianity.

We had to take up a weighty judicial matter stemming from a complex trail of sin that had been hidden in our Second Presbytery. It involved a minister who was accused of grievous abuses but had disrupted the judicial process by excommunicating himself. Further investigation revealed that judicial missteps and some patterns of unholy allegiances and even retribution had hindered those sins from coming into the light. Synod, which is an appellate court, had no appeal to hear, no plaintiff to restore. Because of the failure of process, after significant deliberation, we exercised our constitutional authority to create, dissolve and rearrange presbyterial boundaries. We dissolved our Second Presbytery and redistributed her ministers and congregations into neighboring presbyteries, a process which went smoothly, and just a small number of ministers, and sadly two congregations chose not accede to the Synod and removed themselves from our fellowship.

More recently we have confronted the sin of Kinism, which was being labeled, “racial realism” by two ministers now removed from our Grace Presbytery. This serious error was being promoted as though connected to the gospel of our Lord, but in fact is no gospel at all and had sewn serious division in one of our congregations.

While it saddens me to have to publicly share these burdens, we do so that you might bear them with us, and nonetheless we thank God even for his chastening. These events have caused good men to endure having mud thrown at them, particularly as it happens too often these days, from dark anonymous corners of the internet. We believe what our Westminster Standards teach, that these difficult efforts have been effective for making Christ’s Church “more pure.” The Word and Spirit of our God having entrusted to us the “keys of the kingdom,” has allowed us to demonstrate to the world what your own confession elegantly calls, the “third mark of the true church.”

Our joys come from slow but steady success in planting ordinary means of grace, Psalm-centric, Sabbatarian churches both in North America and through our various foreign missions. We continue to cling to our most principal distinctive, which came from our origin in the Marrow Controversy in Scotland in the early 1700s, the free offer of the gospel. It is worth noting to Continental brothers that even that phrase from The Marrow of Modern Divinity, that most warm piece of theological writing which revitalized the preaching of the ministers of the Associate presbytery 300 years ago was itself borrowed language. That notion, of “The Free Offer of the

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Gospel" is owed to the Canons of Dort which say, "the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published . . . promiscuously."

Lord willing, this year we will spawn what will be our third daughter synod, as our Canadian Presbytery, with whom many of you are well acquainted, will become their own national synod and endeavor to redirect previously shared resources and energy into further church planting and indigenous ministerial training on this side of the line, less encumbered by the practical and fiduciary challenges of being a bi-national denomination.

We will miss these dear brothers very much but we are exploring ways to commit to greater international unity with the ARP Synods of Mexico, Pakistan (115,000 members amidst a predominant Hindu and Islamic culture), the United States, and Canada. Thank you for pledging swift contact with the future ARP of Canada when, if the Lord wills, they organize this coming Fall.

Brothers we are encouraged in many ways, and especially by the prospect of growing closer to you.

To that end I'd like to take the opportunity to address what seem to be the two main questions that you and your people have about us in the ARP. The first that I have been asked is about our worship. The ARP was once a communion utilizing exclusive Psalmody, but since the mid-twentieth century has been a Psalm-centric denomination. Let me quote a few lines from our Directory of Public Worship: "all music used in the worship service shall be under the authority of the minister and session." "Music offered merely for human entertainment or pleasure has no place in a worship service." "The Psalms of the Holy Scripture ought to be used regularly in the public worship of God." "Other hymns may also be used, provided that their content is in agreement with the Word of God, particularly the Psalms, and the doctrinal standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church." Perhaps some of that language will offer some utility to you. Across the ARP you will find a continuum of practice in our churches. For instance, my own congregation sings the Psalms and a handful of New Testament canticles, all a cappella, while in most of our churches you will encounter worship very similar in style and content to our brothers in the URCNA and OPC.

The second matter which you men have been openly asking about is a provision in our Form of Government which reads as follows, "Unless otherwise determined by the Session, the Diaconate shall be chosen from male members of that congregation. The Session of each congregation shall determine whether women can serve as deacons in their own particular congregation. In either case, the Church shall not neglect the raising up of qualified men to serve in this position." Our definition of a deacon is defined as "one of sympathy and service."

Please understand that since the founding of the ARP in America, in 1782 there has never been an opening of the teaching and ruling offices to women. The provision which came to be in 1969 was one for local sessions to determine a use for unique situations where the elders set a person

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apart for mercy or helps, conferring no spiritual authority. Some have cited evidence of women deacons in the New Testament church. Some have cited John Calvin in this matter in the way in which he seems to describe certain elements of woman-to-woman widow care, and even a service less known in our society, but that of a wet-nurse, as a type of diaconal office.

I think a comment on presbyterian polity may also be helpful here. Where in Continental, Consistorial polity, the diaconate is called upon from time to time to sit with the consistory as the council and function as a deliberative, decision-making assembly. Not so in our system, the diaconate strictly serves at the pleasure of the session of elders, but does not deliberate, and is not an authoritative court of the church.

Your CER report rightly states that the provision is infrequently used in our churches, less than ten percent. There is no requirement to do so, it is not a litmus test, it has never been “required,” It is not an ARP distinctive, it is not an article of our faith, it is not sine-qua-non for us, in fact it is a holdover from a complicated time in 20th century American Presbyterian history which is dying out among us, particular among the younger generation. In fact, I am free to express my conscience on the matter that though I disagree with the provision, and am allowed to teach against it, and will declare to you that though I believe this provision to be a minor error, I will continue to labor with my bothers as we work it out. We would ask you to patiently bear with us as well, as we work it out, much in the way that you have agreed with the brothers in the ERQ.

What are definitive markers of being an ARP, are the promiscuous broadcasting of the seed of the gospel, our Marrow theology, the free offer of the gospel, the inerrancy of holy Scripture, regulated Reformed worship, the promotion of the Reformed confession, and a warm, Reformed catholicity toward the true church, the household and family of God.

May the LORD continually guard and bless your labors. I am thankful for the privilege of seeing God’s benediction upon you in this assembly.

#### **Appendix 11 – Free Church of Scotland (FCS) - Letter by Rev. Malcolm Macleod**

To the esteemed Moderator, Fathers and Brothers gathered in General Synod,

On behalf of the Free Church of Scotland, we send greetings to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as you gather in General Synod on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2025. We gratefully acknowledge our relationship together as churches united in our faith and in the body of Christ.

As your Synod is convened in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, it will be our continued prayer that the Lord will bless you and guide you in your deliberations as you seek faithfully to serve Him in the government of His church. We also pray that the Lord will bless your Ministers and congregations with vision and grace as they seek to serve your people in the gospel.

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Thank you.

Yours in the Lord on behalf of the Free Church of Scotland Interchurch Relations Committee



Malcolm Macleod

Principal Clerk

**Appendix 12 – Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America – Address by Johnathan Kruis**

Brothers, on behalf of the RPCNA, I bring greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of the church.

We praise God for your testimony of boldly proclaiming the gospel and upholding the riches of the Reformed faith in a context that is increasingly antagonistic to the truth.

Some updates on the RPCNA:

- 2025 marks the 50th Anniversary of NAPARC. The RPCNA has the privilege of hosting the 2025 meeting and have laid plans to commemorate the event with a special address by Dr. Chad Van Dixhorn. This will take place at Geneva College, Beaver Falls, PA on November 12, 2025 and will be open to the public.
- We have had modest growth in the membership of the denomination. Over the last 20 years we've had a deliberate emphasis on outreach and church planting. Please pray for us in these endeavors.
- With many new, young congregations we also have, on average, smaller congregations, each needing elders and a pastor. There is certainly a need in every age for pastors and elders to serve the flock of Christ. Pray for men for the ministry!
- You would perhaps be most interested in the forming of a new Canadian, Reformed denomination, as we sent out our Canadian churches to form the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada in March 2023. I am encouraged to read of your desire to make contact with that denomination and pursue a relationship.
- One of the more significant things coming before our Synod this year is a study committee report considering our current practice of ordaining women to the office of deacon, a non-authoritative office of mercy ministry under the supervision of the elders. Please pray for us as we deliberate on that matter.

I am personally very thankful for the Canadian Reformed Churches and not only because I married one of her daughters.

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Through dating and marrying a member of this very congregation (Aldergrove), I was exposed to a rich heritage of confessional piety and the Lord used the Canadian Reformed Church to stir in me a greater love for God's Word, for the Church and for Worship.

I wouldn't normally bring up a distinctive on which we differ when giving greetings, but you seem to be asking the question this Synod, and so if I could be so bold as to encourage you with all love and respect, to not forget that God himself has provided the book of praise for his church in the middle of your Bibles (i.e. the book of Psalms).

Praise God that we can rejoice together that ultimately what makes our worship pleasing before our Holy God is that we are covered in the precious blood of Christ through faith.

As you make your deliberations we encourage you not to capitulate to the spirit of the age that is anti-authoritarian, bows to expressive individualism and devalues the past. Look to your roots, the sound forms of words that summarize the faith, our rich heritage. But also don't blindly follow tradition. Our prayer for you is what we ask that you would pray for us, that as bodies our decisions would be made with principled conviction formed by the truth of God's Word, and not out of fear, not for pragmatism, not for innovation, not out of tradition, not to appease the majority, not to appease the next generation, and certainly not to appease the world, but guided by the Spirit of Wisdom through the Word.

May the Lord guide you in all wisdom, and let us rejoice in your own unity in the gospel as a federation.

We would ask that we continue to seek fraternity, grounded in the unity that we do share in Christ. May we always be pursuing greater expression of that unity, while seeking to maintain conviction and purity of doctrine.

In closing I'd like to read a portion of our covenant of 1871 related to pursuing unity. This was a commitment made by our denomination when trying to solidify our identity as a North American denomination. "That, believing the Church to be one, and that all the saints have communion with God and with one another in the same Covenant; believing, moreover, that schism and sectarianism are sinful in themselves; and inimical to true religion, and trusting that divisions shall cease, and the people of God become one Catholic church over all the earth, we will pray and labor for the visible oneness of the Church of God in our own land and throughout the world, on the basis of truth and of Scriptural order.

Considering it a principal duty of our profession to cultivate a holy brotherhood, we will strive to maintain Christian friendship with pious men of every name, and to feel and act as one with all in every land who pursue this grand end. And, as a means of securing this great result, we will by dissemination and application of the principles of truth herein professed, and by cultivating and

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exercising Christian charity, labor to remove stumbling-blocks, and to gather into one the scattered and divided friends of truth and righteousness.”

Brothers, know that you are not alone in your deliberations, and in ministry. You are friends of truth and righteousness. Thank you and praise God for your bold testimony of proclaiming God’s word and delighting in his commandments. By God’s grace, may you continue to do so.

**Appendix 13 – Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) – Address by Rev. Jack Schoeman**

Esteemed brethren

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address your synod meeting.

I was asked to do so by our denominational Interchurch Relations Committee. I am not currently a member of this committee, but I serve the Emmanuel Free Reformed Church in Abbotsford and therefore in good Dutch fashion it seemed financially prudent to delegate someone local rather than spend hundreds of dollars on travel expenses by bringing in someone from out of province.

I should also mention that I am here with my friend and colleague Rev. John Koopman who is the pastor of the Free Reformed Church in Chilliwack and who (by the way) is an alumnus of your Theological College.

Part of me feels very much at home with you. I have a longstanding connection to your churches.

When I was young (which is a few years ago now), my parents sent me and my older sister to John Calvin School on Dynes Rd in Burlington (which I believe has since been torn down) and then I attended Guido de Brès Christian High School in Hamilton.

Those were some of the best years of my life. I benefitted greatly from the education I received there (especially from Dr. Oosterhoff who imparted to me a great love of history) and Dr. Bill Helder who imparted to me a love of English literature and (strangely enough) Latin. I even had a Canadian Reformed girlfriend for a while!

As your report on Ecumenical Relations indicates, the relationship between our two federations has had its ups and downs over the years. Our golden age was in the early to mid 90s (even before we had formal ecclesiastical contact at the federative level).

At that time a document was produced entitled “A Call for Ecclesiastical Unity Between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of North America.” If memory serves, the document was written largely by Dr. James Visscher (then pastor of the Langley Can

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Ref Church) and Dr. L.W. Bilkes, then the pastor of the Emmanuel Free Reformed Church in Aldergrove (now Abbotsford) which I currently serve, but there were spaces for signatures from representatives of the Cdn Ref and Free Ref Churches of Langley, Aldergrove and Chilliwack.

The document called on our respective synods to effect a merger of the Cdn Ref and Free Ref churches into a new federation called—get this—”The United Reformed Churches of North America”! (This was before the URCNA was born). It laid out the grounds for such a merger and contained statements about the covenant, preaching, Bible translation, the *Book of Praise*, the Church Order, the Liturgical Forms, the training of ministers, and Interchurch Relations.

To my knowledge, the document was never signed by the local consistories or presented to either of our two synods. But it was an ambitious plan.

Remarkably, around the same time the consistory of the Langley Can Ref Church even made a decision to the minister of the Emmanuel FRC in Abbotsford to preach on their pulpit. By the way, I have been pastoring in Abbotsford for over 10 years but still have not received an invitation! Although in fairness, we have never extended such an invitation to any of you either.

Contacts were discontinued in the early 2000s but they were resumed in 2017 and they have been going well ever since. I think there are two reasons for this:

**1. You have changed (for the better)**

- a. There is a welcome softening of your position on the pluriformity of the church (or at least some of its practical consequences). When I was younger I heard a lot (also at school) about how the CanRC was the only true church and that we in the FRC were wrong for not joining with the CanRC. And if a member of one of your churches left to join a Free Ref church it was publicly announced that that person has left the church of Jesus Christ. Thankfully I don't hear that kind of talk much anymore. Today we can sit down together as brothers. That makes it much easier for us to dialogue.
- b. There is also a welcome shift (at least among some) in your view of preaching. There are voices in your federation (welcome voices I might add) that are cautioning against a strictly redemptive historical approach to preaching in favour of a more experiential approach. I refer to a series of articles entitled “Redemptive Historical Preaching Today” published in the *Clarion* back in 2018 by Dr Arjan de Visser which I read with great interest and thankfulness.
- c. I have even heard a few sermons from some of your ministers warning against hyper-covenantalism, emphasizing that the promises of the covenant are not automatically fulfilled in the hearts and lives of covenant children together with a call to repent and believe and the need to be born again. I am thinking here especially of a sermon by Dr G.H. Visscher which he preached at the Bethel Cdn Ref Church in Toronto on Feb 26, 2023 (available on YouTube). I was so excited to hear this that I sent the sermon to all of my colleagues in the FRC and HRC urging them to listen to it and to give God thanks for this development. This resonates with us and gives us hope that the

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issues that we have been discussing with you for many years are starting to bear some fruit.

d. In addition, we have observed among some of your ministers a growing interest in the Puritans.

All this is to say (as mentioned earlier) that you have changed—and for the better. I think it is fair to say we have far more in common today than we did 30 or 40 or even 20 years ago.

Does that mean that we are ready for pulpit exchanges or even advancing our level of contact? I cannot speak on behalf of our synod, but having been raised in the FRC and serving as a minister for almost 25 years I don't think we would be quite ready for that. We find (notwithstanding the positive developments I just mentioned) a kind of covenantal optimism among you that makes us uneasy. You seem to emphasize the certainty of the promises of God in the covenant of grace to the point that it comes across (to us at least) that these promises are automatically fulfilled in the hearts and lives of all covenant children head for head, leading to an overly optimistic view of the congregation and a corresponding downplaying of the call to conversion and the need to be born again.

Again, this is changing. But if I read our churches correctly, it will have to change a lot more before we would be ready to move to the next level much less open our pulpits to all of your ministers. So we still have much to talk about.

## ***2. But we have also changed.***

Historically the FRC has been quite insular—partly, I think, because we are so small and therefore somewhat afraid of being overshadowed up by our much larger cousins, but also because we have always been very concerned (and still are) about presumption and an overly optimistic view of the covenant of grace.

Having said that, over the years we have come more and more to appreciate our Presbyterian and Reformed brethren and realize that we have a lot to learn from them—including your own federation. We also experience a growing spiritual kinship with many of them—and you—through our contacts at the ICRC, NAPARC.

We have also come to realize—as you have—that the real enemy is not each other. The real enemy is the world which is attacking the church with increasing ferocity requiring us to work together more closely. This too is a positive development.

We have also noted with interest some other developments in your federation such as the discussion you had several years ago about women voting and especially your willingness to accept in your federation daughter churches that consciously and deliberately depart from the

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historic, Canadian Reformed standards of worship. This surprise us and makes us wonder where this will eventually lead.

We have also taken note of your decision to end your full corresponding relationship with your mother church in the Netherlands. As you may know, we are facing the same decision when it comes to our own mother church, the CGK, which, sadly, is on the verge of imploding.

These are painful developments.

May the Lord have mercy on both federations and call them back to biblical faithfulness.

Some of the times in your agenda for this meeting also deserve comment. I observed that you are struggling with some of the same issues that we are struggling with. There are, for example, several overtures dealing with the Liturgical Forms. Our own denomination has been in the process of revising and updating our Forms and Confessions. We have also had a lengthy discussion about the Apostles' Creed including the phrase "He descended into hell."

You also have several overtures dealing with what may be sung in your worship services. You may be interested to know that our churches, in conjunction with the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Heritage Reformed Churches, recently completed an overhaul of the 1912 Psalter.

Our synod (which meets in June) will consider a recommendation to expand the singing of more Scripture Songs in our worship services. Perhaps these are areas in which we can work more closely together.

Let me say in closing that our churches value our contacts with you. Let's keep meeting. Let's keep getting to know each other and understand each other better. In the meantime, let us seek to work together as much as possible in areas of common interest.

While we have our differences, we have much more in common. We share part of the same history. We love and cherish the same creeds, confessions, and forms. We have a similar order of worship and church life. But most importantly we love and preach the same Saviour for poor and needy sinners. He suffered and died for our sins so that we might have life. All praise and thanks to Him!

I commend you to the Lord with the words of Ephesians 3:14–19: "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is

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the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

May the Lord bless you all and may He bless this synod and the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

**Appendix 14 – Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) – Address by Rev. Anthon Souman**

Brother Chairman,

It feels quite familiar for us as delegates of the FRCA to be here in your midst. This church building is well known to me as I have preached here several times in the past. Both my colleague Rev. Bredenhof and I have served as minister of the Word in a congregation in the Fraser Valley, as well as in other Canadian Reformed Churches. We know quite a few delegates present here.

And that is not only true for us, but for many ministers within the FRCA. And not only ministers, also many other members of our churches have strong bonds with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

The FRCA considers the Canadian Reformed Churches to be our closest sister church. We send our students to the same seminary, in Hamilton, Ontario. There is a lot of traffic back and forth between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the FRCA. Several members of the FRCA found spouses in the CanRC. Until recently, we made use of the Canadian Reformed *Book of Praise*. And there is good cooperation in mission work in several areas of the world between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the FRCA.

And we also very much appreciate the warm contacts that our delegates have had at several of the assemblies of our mutual sister churches.

It is therefore with gratitude and joy that we bring you the greetings of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. In many of our churches this General Synod was brought before the LORD in our prayers on this past Sunday. We pray that God may grant you His blessings and that His name will be glorified by this assembly.

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia have seen continued growth over the past three years. Three new congregations could be instituted in the metro Perth, which brings the number of congregations in the FRCA to 19, with a total membership of just over 5500. It may be of interest to mention that, just as you see in Canada, we also may receive a growing number of new members from a non-Dutch background.

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With the growth of the number of congregations also the number of vacancies has grown. At the moment we have six vacancies for ministers of the Word. As you may know, historically there has been a lot of movement back and forth of ministers between our two countries. Since the FRCA do not have their own seminary, we depend on ministers and students coming from Canada to serve in Australia. However, recent changes by the government in the granting of visas to ministers make it difficult, almost impossible, for Australian churches to call Canadian ministers. Therefore, we have to focus on Australians who are either serving in Canada or graduating from the seminary. We are therefore thankful to the Lord of the Church that we could witness several Australian brothers moving to Canada to attend the seminary in Hamilton, and we are grateful for the work that is being done at the seminary.

At the Synod in Darling Downs in 2024, the FRCA decided to continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.

Some more decisions that Synod Darling Downs made and may be of interest to you are:

- A second tier of church relations was adopted. Synod acknowledged that sometimes it is just not possible to maintain a full sister church relationship with a church federation which we acknowledge as true and faithful and with which we have some form of cooperation. For those situations we have introduced the category of ecclesiastical contact. To enter into a sister church relationship the synod decided to use the criteria “Faithful,” “Meaningful,” and “Manageable.” If a relationship is faithful and meaningful, but not sufficiently manageable, then the relationship of “Ecclesiastical Contact” can be extended to such a federation.
- Synod Darling Downs also decided to send observers to the ICRC for the next two conferences in 2026 and 2030. We acknowledge here with gratitude the strong encouragement which we received from your committee as well your delegates at the Synod.
- Synod decided to work towards the establishment of an Australian Seminary in the long term. Long term means around 2040. This must be done in close cooperation with the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and the establishment of an Australian Seminary must not be detrimental to CRTS.
- Of note here is that at the moment many of the Australian students preparing to go to CRTS are being trained by Rev. Anderson in the languages Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. The church of Rockingham decided, with the cooperation of other churches in the federation, to set Rev. Anderson apart for the training of future seminary students in these languages, so that they will be well prepared when they begin their training at the seminary.
- With regard to the situation in the Netherlands, the synod decided to work towards a sister church relationship with the DGK and GKN once they become a united federation. Deputies are also mandated to monitor the situation in the Netherlands with respect to other Reformed churches in the Netherlands, especially those that have left or are still leaving the former RCN. Seeing the supplementary report of your committee regarding the churches in the Netherlands, we believe that it is very much aligned with that decision

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and we hope for a good cooperation between your committee and our deputies with regard to the situation in the Netherlands.

As deputies, we received the mandate to monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit, especially regarding church polity, liturgy, and other areas that deputies might identify. We notice that there are several proposals on your agenda in those areas. We hope to be able to have our input on these matters and to encourage you in this to continue in the Reformed paths that both our federations have gone until now. We realize that the Canadian Reformed Churches are living in a different situation than the Free Reformed Churches. You have many contacts and relationships with other federations in North America, which undoubtedly has an impact on how you do things within your churches. We also notice that there is a growing influx of new members from a non-Dutch background, which is beautiful, but also has its challenges which you will have to consider in many areas. We, as much as possible, want to support and encourage you in these discussions and pray that you will make your decisions in faithfulness to the Lord of the Church.

Several of the items on your agenda have our special interest.

1. The proposal of the CER regarding sister church relationships, and the change of the Church Order. This matter was on the agenda of the FRCA synod Darling Downs as well, as I mentioned before. However, we note that your proposal also mentions the involvement of local churches in exercising relationships with other churches, whereas the FRCA kept the matter of relationship entirely at the level of the synod. We are interested in hearing the discussion on this matter, and what the practical consequences are for us as deputies of the FRCA if it comes to certain relationships, which are maintained at the local level.
2. We note your growing number of relationships with church federations in North America. Among those relationships we are especially interested in your relationship with the URCNA and the OPC, because we also are in contact with these church federations and may benefit from your knowledge of and experience with these churches.
3. The changes to the *Book of Praise*: As FRCA we have recently adopted our own *Book of Praise*, which still looks very much like the Canadian Book of Praise. As such changes to your *Book of Praise* do not directly affect us anymore. However, we are still interested in what is happening in our sister churches, with regard to liturgical changes, not only to the psalms and hymns but also to the forms in your *Book of Praise*. Also here we note the proposal to give more freedom to local consistories to approve songs to be sung in the worship services. We follow this discussion with keen interest.
4. There are several relationships with sister churches outside of North America which we have in common. We are thankful that we can meet several of their delegates here at this assembly.

Brother Chairman, it is a joy for us as delegates of the FRCA to be here in your midst and to experience the unity in faith in our triune God. We work for the same goal, for God's glory and

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the gathering of His Church. A lot of the struggles we are dealing with we have in common, and we can encourage each other in that. That is why we are given to each other as sister churches.

We thank you for the interest you have shown in the FRCA and its work, as we can read about it in the reports, as well as by sending a delegation to our latest synod in Darling Downs. We are grateful for the encouragement we could receive, and we in turn are here to encourage you to remain faithful to the Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ. We hope to be able to serve you with advice and we pray that God may bless your deliberations and the decisions you make.

May our sister church relationship continue to flourish so that we may work together in God's kingdom.

Thank you, Chairman.

**Appendix 15 – Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) – Address by Rev. Johan Bruintjes**

Brothers, Delegates of Synod, Esteemed Guests,

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, I bring you heartfelt greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—He who is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

We are gathered here not merely as delegates of the different churches, but as delegates of the one holy catholic church—called by God Himself to be living stones in the glorious temple He is building. Each of you is taking your place in God's unfolding story, walking in the good works He has prepared for you during these weeks of deliberation. May the Lord bless His church-building work through your labor.

Though the world has been shaken over the past year—particularly in the geopolitical realm - the church remains as united as ever across every tongue, tribe, nation, and language. Physically, we are located on opposite sides of the globe. But spiritually, we are one family: sharing one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all.

Many of you around this table I consider not only brothers in Christ but dear friends and co-laborers. At our own Synod in 2024, we were grateful for the wisdom and encouragement brought by your fraternal delegates—Rev. Temple and Rev. Bruintjes (who happens to share my last name!). These personal connections give tangible expression to our fraternal bonds, and we are thankful to God for this rich Christian fellowship.

As I perused your agenda, I was struck by the range of matters you have been called to consider—from discussions on Article 55 to the duration of synod meetings, from baptismal

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forms to theological education. Although our context is different there is overlap, and I would like to briefly highlight several topics close to our hearts.

### Theological Education

The relationship between our churches has been particularly visible in the area of theological education. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few! As a small federation, we have long wrestled with how best to train our students for the ministry. A decade ago, we signed a memorandum of understanding with CRTS to begin sending our students there for theological training. We are deeply grateful for your support—both in prayer and financial assistance.

It has been a joy to witness the growth in our students as they return to intern among us. This close relationship with CRTS has also encouraged more young men to consider the call to the ministry. We thank the Lord for your kind and generous support.

At our most recent synod, we also had a lively discussion on the future of theological education in South Africa. In August, we plan to host a federation-wide conference to develop a unified vision for theological training. This includes evaluating whether our current model remains the most suitable for our context for the long term.

### Mission Work

In a country marked by staggering unemployment, widespread poverty, corruption, and crime, the gospel of the resurrected Christ offers a powerful and hope-filled contrast. And we rejoice that the Lord is opening hearts to receive that gospel. Since your last synod, two new mission churches have been instituted in South Africa.

However, as mission work expands, funding has decreased. Historically, Dutch churches supported up to 95% of our mission efforts. That support has declined to around 50% and is increasingly directed toward deed ministry. Furthermore, once a mission church is instituted, this external support typically ends.

This shift presents both challenges and opportunities to forge new partnerships and to grow in our ownership of the work. Please pray with us as we seek a sustainable, faithful model for church planting and mission work in our country.

We are also thankful for the ongoing support of individuals and churches involved in the Reformational Study Centre. This ministry continues to expand and is being used by God to touch the lives of thousands across the world. I encourage you to check out their website.

### Relations with Churches in Africa

We are delighted to grow in our involvement with ICRC Africa, which allows us to strengthen ties with churches closer to home. African churches have much to contribute to the global body

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of Christ and, by God's grace, represent one of the fastest-growing segments of the worldwide church. Praise be to God!

Locally, we are also working more closely with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA), who are fellow members of the ICRC. At the local level, we are grateful for pulpit exchanges and, at the synodical level, for a memorandum of cooperation. We look forward to deepening our relationship both locally and nationally.

### **Relations with Churches Abroad**

We continue to benefit greatly from our participation in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). In October 2024, the Cape Town Free Reformed Church hosted the ICRC Africa Regional Conference. It was a joy to welcome brothers and sisters from across the continent to share resources and deepen our unity in Christ. For a small federation like ours, the ICRC is a vital means of expressing our Reformed confessional unity globally.

Our relationship with the GKv officially ended on May 1, 2023, with the merger between the GKv and the NGK. Synod Mamelodi 2024 marked the first time in our history that no one from the GKv was present. However, from the aftermath of that merger has arisen a newly formed federation—the Geriformeerde Kerken. As of our last synod, this federation had not yet been officially constituted. Therefore, our synod resolved to extend the sister-church invitation to their first official synod in 2026.

### **Hymns**

At our last synod, we adopted a document titled *Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You Richly*. This was prepared in response to various objections raised over the years regarding the use of hymns. The document is written in an accessible way for the average church member and affirms our belief that hymnody is not only beneficial but essential for singing the full riches of Christ and our life in Him.

This in no way diminishes our love for the Psalms. On the contrary, we treasure the Psalms deeply and are grateful for the rich heritage we share with you in that regard.

### **Closing**

In closing, as I reflect on the weighty matters before you, I pray that God would grant this assembly the wisdom from above—that wisdom which is, as James writes, “first pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere” (James 3:17). I am thankful that I have seen the wisdom from above among you.

Be assured of our continued prayers and deep affection. We are very grateful for our relationship and love you in Christ. To God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, both now and forever.

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**Appendix 16 – Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) – Address by Rev. John Procee**

Dear brothers,

It is my great pleasure to be here today to extend my greetings to you on behalf of the Heritage Reformed Churches. I need to state, that I am not a member of our Church Correspondence Committee, and that I have actually been parachuted in to help them out as none of their committee members were able to be here.

Personally, I serve in the Chilliwack congregation, having been there since early 2021, and have had the privilege of getting to know a number of Canadian Reformed members through interactions in the community.

Brothers, we are thankful for the relationship that we continue to have with you as churches, and our Church Correspondence Committee instructed me to address you with gratitude for the excellent communication that they experience between our committees and yours at NAPARC meetings. They wanted me to express, which I also personally echo, their encouragement in hearing that your pastors are more and more calling people to repentance and to walk worthy of their calling, not taking their being Christian for granted.

The Heritage Reformed Churches just had its annual Synod meetings in Grand Rapids last week, where we noted your absence, but understandably so, since we normally meet in June, and your delegates were likely planning on that. We do hope to meet next year, in Jordan, Ontario, concurrently with the Free Reformed Churches, during the week of June 8, 2026, the Lord willing.

We currently have the blessing of 2300 souls in our total membership, serving communities in 11 different locations throughout North America, with our latest congregation being instituted last year, in Conway, Arkansas.

The HRC is involved in world missions on various levels, primarily supporting theological education at Mukhanyo Theological College in South Africa, under the leadership of Dr. Brian DeVries, sending a lecturer to Covenant College in Zambia each year, and financially supporting El-Soora Ministries in Alexandria, Egypt for an annual conference they hold at the Alexandria School of Theology.

We also support pastors and evangelists in the South Sudan Reformed Church, and just last week approved providing similar support to a Presbyterian denomination operating in Pakistan. Our recent synod also approved work among churches in China seeking to form a new Reformed denomination in that country, which we have committed to guiding them through. We also support a long-standing children's ministry on the island of Sumba, in Indonesia. Translation work of Bible Doctrine books into Spanish and Indonesian is also ongoing.

We are thankful for the Lord's blessing on Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and its partner seminaries around the world, including in Taipei, Taiwan, Alexandria, Egypt, London, England, and Sao Paulo, Brazil. The past 10 years have witnessed tremendous blessing for our bookstore, Reformation Heritage Books, with sales going from around \$1 million around 2015 to \$7 million last year. The hunger for sound Reformed experiential material is growing in many places around the world.

We are also very excited to share with you that work is steadily progressing on the establishment of the Puritan Reformed College, which will be a primarily online undergraduate institution,

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offering biblically-sound, Reformed programs of study to Christian young people. All courses offered will be transferable to secular universities in the US and Canada, and degrees granted will also be fully recognized.

We would also like to share with you that we are beginning to realize the importance of biblical counseling within the Reformed church setting and that we will be promoting this also at the next NAPARC meetings.

In closing, thank you for your time, and let me read with you Acts 20:24, where Paul addresses the elders of Ephesus on the shores of Miletus, “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

May the Lord further bless your meetings, your churches, and your fellowship.

Thank you.

#### **Appendix 17 – Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) – Letter from Rev. Jeong Tae-jin**

Greetings to the Canadian Reformed Church General Synod, Assembly

I sincerely congratulate the Reformed Church of Canada, united in the Lord Jesus Christ, on the gracious hosting of the General Assembly.

We are called in the same Reformed faith, standing firmly on the Word of God and walking together in love for the Church of Christ. I pray that this General Assembly will strengthen that faithful journey and be filled with precious blessings that build up the Church of the Lord.

May the Lord grant wisdom and discernment to all participants in the General Assembly, so that the will of God may be clearly revealed in every decision and discussion. I also hope this Assembly will further clarify the identity of the Reformed faith in Canada and serve as an opportunity to shine the light of the gospel in unity with brother churches around the world.

Though we are far apart, we join you as one in heart and prayer, earnestly hoping that the Lord’s grace and peace will abound over this General Assembly.

Pastor Jeong Tae-jin

President, General Assembly of the Kosin Presbyterian Church

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**Appendix 18 – Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) – Letter from the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad - IRB**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We send you warm fraternal greetings, in the name of our Lord and Savior, as dear sister churches here in Brazil.

On behalf of the Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil (Reformed Churches of Brazil) our Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CCIE-IRB) would like to thank you for the invitation for us to send a delegation to your Synod. It has certainly always been our desire to be able to be represented at these important assemblies, as a sister church. However, we regret that we are unable to send a delegate this time to represent our churches at this Synod.

We, too, will be having our Nacional Concílio (synod) from May 19 to 23, to be held in Holambra–São Paulo. We covet your prayers as we consider a very full agenda, including matters of significant importance, such as relations with other churches in Brazil, theological matters, relations with other foreign churches and two examinations for the ministry of the Word.

We sincerely pray that the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, through His Word and Holy Spirit, guide your deliberations and decisions in such a way that they may edify the churches in your country and thus bring honor and glory to our God and Father in heaven.

May the Canadian Reformed Churches remain faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ and thus be a blessing to many in your country and beyond.

May God grant you his peace and blessings.

On behalf of the Reformed Churches of Brazil,  
CCIE - Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad - IRB

**Appendix 19 – Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI) – Letter from Rev. Pila Njuka**

Mr. Chairman and all delegates.

First of all, we are terribly sorry for our very late letter of greetings to your Synod. We received the invitation a few months ago. It is a privilege for us to be invited to your Synod as one of your sister churches around the world. We would like to attend your Synod, but because we are unable to fund our trip, by way of this letter we send you our greetings. We commend you to our Triune God that you may make good decisions according to God's Word and our Church Order for the benefit of our churches and especially for the glory of our God.

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We pray and hope that our relationship as sister churches may be strengthened and that we may help each other in our own capacities. Have a blessed Synod and God be with you all.

Chairman Rev. Pila Njuka

#### **Appendix 20 – Mandate for the Archiving Church**

##### **Mandate for the Church appointed to maintain the Archives of the General Synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches**

From the first General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Synod Homewood in 1954, General Synods have expressed the desirability of maintaining the records of their meetings, the decisions made and all the supporting documents used as rationale for making the decisions. This is in line with the requirements of keeping archives as expressed in Church Order Article 43. In order to consistently preserve and maintain the materials from general synods and from committees appointed to serve general synods, General Synod appoints a church responsible for collecting and preserving the material in an archive. For continuity, the Burlington-Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church is the designated Archive Church and is to be re-appointed by each General Synod.

The Archive Church shall adhere to the following mandate adopted by General Synod:

- A. The Archive Church shall appoint a person to be the Archivist, who is responsible for the work of collecting and maintaining the archives.
- B. The Archive Church shall provide a suitable secure place for keeping the archives, and shall supply filing cabinets and whatever other items are required. Costs are to be reimbursed from the General Fund.
- C. The Archive Church shall submit a report on the condition and activity of the archives to each General Synod six months prior to convocation.
- D. The Archive Church shall, within three months of the end of each General Synod, send a letter to each committee requesting that they submit for the archives any materials more than ten years old, and which they no longer need for their duties as committees of General Synod. The materials submitted are left to the discretion of the committees, which may decide to keep their own archives to facilitate their duties.
- E. The archives of General Synod shall contain the following materials in hard copy pertaining to General Synods:
  - One copy of the acts of each General Synod;
  - One copy of all the reports of the committees of General Synod and their sub-committees;
  - One copy of all correspondence regarding the calling of General Synod sent by the church responsible for calling General Synod;
  - One copy of the credentials of the delegates to General Synod;

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- One signed copy of all the correspondence to and from each General Synod filed in binders, particular to each General Synod, and in the order of the agenda of the General Synod;
- One copy of all material from the committees and their sub-committees, including meeting minutes, correspondence, and documents; and
- One copy of each annual yearbook of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

The materials shall be properly catalogued in an index to facilitate reference.

- F. Non-confidential documents of the General Synod archives may be obtained as photocopies at the expense of the person requesting them.
- G. The archives shall be made available for inspection by the delegates from the church appointed by the previous General Synod to inspect the archives and submit a report to the next General Synod.

## **Appendix 21 – Proposal re inclusion of non-CanRC theological students**

Esteemed Brothers,

We would like to raise for your assembly what we believe is either a grey area or perhaps more accurately an as-yet unmapped area when it comes to our ecclesiastical fellowship with other churches and that is this: what precisely is the standing of our mutual theological students who are licensed to preach among the churches of their respective federations? Does being licensed to preach (or: speak an edifying word, CO Art 21) in one federation mean that such a student is automatically licensed to preach in the other federation (which is in EF)? What about when a student has sustained a preparatory examination and is available for call in one federation—may he preach in the interim in a sister church? May he be called by a sister church?

We have inquired of both CRTS and the CER secretary and in both cases received the answer that no rules or guidelines appear to have been established for these kinds of situations as yet. This has brought about uncertainty and some confusion in our own council when wondering if we could invite a URCNA student to preach. Uncertainty was experienced also at our Classis Ontario West meetings where our classis has dealt with requests from South African students (who are students at CRTS) to accept their credentials as students who have received permission to speak an edifying word from a classis in South Africa. Does this sort of thing need to be done for every student of a sister church? That would be tedious to say the least.

As our churches engage in more inter-church relations, and as theological students from various church federations appear to be quite mobile, we can expect to encounter more and more of these kinds of situations and so it would be good for all parties to have a clear agreement in place among our sister churches. We believe that if it can be determined that our mutual students share the same level of theological training and undergo an equivalent examination at a broader assembly, that it would be fitting to agree together as sister churches to allow one another's licensed students to preach on each other's pulpits. We bring this to the attention of GS 2025 to

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point out an over-looked aspect of our ecclesiastical fellowship and to ask that this matter be included in some appropriate place in the mandate of the CER, work then made of it and reported to the churches ahead of GS 2028 where then a decision(s) can be made, the Lord willing.

With that as background we propose the following:

### 1. Observations

- 1.1 Currently the rules for EF adopted by the CanRC do not touch on the area of students of theology who have sustained a licensure exam or a preparatory exam at a broader assembly.
- 1.2 Licensed students of theology from some sister churches (such as the URCNA, FRCSA, FRCA, OPC, and the RCNZ) do live at times in proximity to CanRCs and could be available to preach on our pulpits. Students licensed in various other sister churches (such as the ERQ, FCS, FCSC, GGRI, GGRCI, IRB, PCK, KPCA-Kosin, and the RCUS) have not, to the best of our knowledge, to date lived in proximity to the CanRCs but could potentially in future.
- 1.3 Licensed students of theology from the CanRCs could also at times live in proximity to a sister church (such as the URCNA, FRCSA, FRCA, OPC, and the RCNZ) and could be available to preach on their pulpits. To the best of our knowledge, to date no CanRC theological student licensed in our federation has lived in proximity to various other sister churches (such as the ERQ, FCS, FCSC, GGRI, GGRCI, IRB, PCK, KPCA-Kosin, and the RCUS) but could potentially in future.
- 1.4 Article 21 of the Church Order reads: “Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying word, others may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations, for their own training and in order that they may become known to the congregations.”
- 1.5 Concerning students of theology seeking the right to speak an edifying word in the churches, GS 1971 (Art 76) decided they could do so on the following conditions:
  - 1.5.1 “They shall submit the request for such permission to the Classis.
  - 1.5.2 They shall not do so unless they have completed at least two years of theological studies.
  - 1.5.3 They shall present a good attestation from ‘the Church to which they belong.’
  - 1.5.4 They shall present a certificate from ‘the Faculty of our Theological College that they have satisfactorily completed at least two years of studies at the College.’
  - 1.5.5 They shall deliver a sermon at the Classis and shall be interrogated on the Reformed doctrine.
  - 1.5.6 If, as a result of this examination, the Classis decides to grant their request, permission shall be given for a period not exceeding twelve months, and that under the condition that the student shall submit his sermons to and discuss them with the Lecturer in the Diaconiological department at our College.”
- 1.6 Concerning the overall length of the course of study for theological students in the MDiv program, GS 1974 (Art 171) added a year of introduction to “secure a thorough knowledge of the languages of Holy Writ as a necessary condition for further study,”

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thus extending the program from three to four years. This in turn meant that the minimum “two years of theological studies” became three years.

- 1.7 Concerning students of theology seeking the right to speak an edifying word in the churches, concerning, GS 2019 (Art 85) decided “That this permission or licensure be granted under the following conditions:
  - [1] That the student present a letter to classis from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) that he has successfully completed two years of studies in an approved M.Div. program;
  - [2] That the student sustain an appropriate ecclesiastical exam and supply whatever documents the classis may require;
  - [3] That the student desire to enter gospel ministry, if called to such by the churches;
  - [4] That in the summer immediately following classical permission or licensure—whether this be after either the student’s second or third year of studies—the student must follow a summer internship during which he will work under a particular minister or ministers who will serve as his mentor or mentors and will approve his practice sermons prior to delivery (i.e., the licensure is initially not to be regarded as a broad permission to access all pulpits or to provide pulpit supply to vacant churches, but first of all to undergo practical training);
  - [5] That the mentor write a report for the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS regarding the student’s progress and his suitability for ministry, while the elders, as well as any minister or seminary professors present for the student’s practice preaching, submit evaluations of the student’s preaching and leading of the worship services to the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS;
  - [6] That the license to speak an edifying word be valid for 12 months, with the possibility of one or two 12-month renewals, if a written request is made by the student to the same classis which granted him licensure, before the 12-month period elapses;
  - [7] That during the academic year that follows a summer internship, CRTS students who have received permission to speak an edifying word be expected to discuss with their mentors on the CRTS faculty whether and how much to honour requests from the churches to lead the worship services and speak an edifying word (so that their mentor at CRTS may assist them with advice towards maintaining school and family obligations);
  - [8] That all other regulations remain in place, such as that new practice sermons made outside of the internship periods and before a student graduates from CRTS be subject to approval by the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS, or by a minister recommended by the Senate and appointed by the Board of Governors.”
- 1.8 Concerning students of theology seeking eligibility for call in the Canadian Reformed Churches (by way of a preparatory examination) GS 1958 (Art 188 – later amended by GS 2022, see the Acts of GS 2022, Appendix 23) decided that the following documents must be presented to classis:

“I.2.a Proof that the student has successfully completed the required course of study as referred to in the decisions of Homewood-Carman 1958 (Acts, Art.151).

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I.2.b An attestation from the church or churches to which the students has belonged for the last three years.”

## 2. Considerations

- 2.1 There is a need within both our own federation of churches and those of our sister churches for students of theology to be further trained in the practice of preaching by speaking an edifying word within regular worship services. Since students of theology who have obtained a license to preach from within our own federation as well as those from various sister churches with whom we have contact could potentially be called upon to speak an edifying word, it would be fitting, helpful, and mutually advantageous if we as a federation could come to an agreement with our sister churches regarding giving permission to one another’s students to speak an edifying word within each other’s churches.
- 2.2 There is a need within both our own federation of churches and those of our sister churches to have clarification concerning whether students of theology who have sustained the appropriate preparatory examination (at the appropriate broader assembly) may be called to the ministry by a church in the other’s federation. It would be fitting, helpful, and advantageous if we as a federation could come to an agreement with our sister churches regarding the appropriateness of calling one another’s candidates for the ministry.
- 2.3 Within the Canadian Reformed Churches, our students of theology have to meet certain criteria before they may speak an edifying word as listed in Observations 5, 6, and 7. On the principle of fairness and impartiality (Prov 24:23), it would be fitting to discuss with each sister church whether the criteria in that federation is essentially equivalent to our criteria (and vice versa) and on the basis of a basic equivalency to work out a memorandum of understanding with each sister church giving permission for each other’s students to speak an edifying word in each other’s churches, as invited. If discussions show that such equivalency does not currently exist, it would be good to discuss with such a church what can be done to move toward a basic equivalency of such criteria and a future agreement.
- 2.4 Within the Canadian Reformed Churches, our students of theology have to meet certain criteria before they may be declared eligible for call as listed in Observation 6. On the principle of fairness and impartiality (Prov 24:23), it would be fitting to discuss with each sister church whether the criteria in that federation is essentially equivalent to our criteria (and vice versa) and on the basis of a basic equivalency to work out a memorandum of understanding with each sister church giving permission for the calling of each other’s candidates for the ministry. If discussions show that such equivalency does not currently exist, it would be good to discuss with such a church what can be done to move toward basic equivalency of such criteria and a future agreement.
- 2.5 It would be fitting and wise for the CER to prioritize the pursuit of such agreements with those churches where our mutual students have already been living in proximity to one another, as mentioned in Observation 2. Over time it would be fitting for the CER to discuss this matter with all our remaining sister churches (see Observation 3), or even future sister churches as other ecclesiastical relationships may ripen into formal

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fellowship, prioritizing the ones with whom such preaching opportunities regarding licensed students of theology as well as the calling of one another's candidates for the ministry have realistic potential, as determined by the CER.

### 3. Recommendations

That GS 2025 decide to mandate the CER to:

- 3.1 Discuss with the following sister churches (as a matter of practical priority) what criteria their students of theology must meet to be granted a license to preach (or: speak an edifying word) and whether these criteria are essentially equivalent to the criteria for such students in the Canadian Reformed Churches: the URCNA, FRCSA, FRCA, OPC, and the RCNZ.
  - 3.1.1 If essential equivalency of criteria is agreed upon, to draw up a memorandum of understanding with said church with the aim of securing permission for each other's students to preach in each other's churches, and to present this agreement to the churches six months prior to the next general synod for its approval.
  - 3.1.2 If essential equivalency is not found, to continue discussing with said church what can be done to move toward such essential equivalency, and to report on the progress of these discussions to the churches six months prior to the next general synod.
  - 3.1.3 To undertake, over time, the same discussion (with the same goal of a memorandum of understanding) with each of the rest of our current or future sister churches, prioritizing the churches where our mutual students have realistic potential to live in proximity to one another and thus serve on each other's pulpits as determined by the CER, and presenting either a memorandum of agreement or else reporting on the progress of discussion to the churches six months prior to the next general synod.
- 3.2 Discuss with the following sister churches (as a matter of practical priority) what criteria their candidates for the ministry must meet to become eligible for call, and whether these criteria are essentially equivalent to the criteria for such candidates in the Canadian Reformed Churches: the URCNA, FRCSA, FRCA, OPC, and the RCNZ. To undertake the same discussion with the rest of our current or future sister churches over time, prioritizing the churches where our mutual candidates have realistic potential to be called by one another's churches.
  - 3.2.1 If essential equivalency of criteria is agreed upon, to draw up a memorandum of understanding with said church regarding this matter and present it to the churches six months prior to GS 2028.
  - 3.2.2 If essential equivalency is not found, to continue discussing with said church what can be done to move toward such essential equivalency and to report on the progress of these discussion to the churches six months prior to GS 2028.
  - 3.2.3 To undertake, over time, the same discussion with the rest of our current or future sister churches, prioritizing the churches where our mutual students have realistic potential to be called by one another's churches as determined by the CER, and reporting on the progress to the churches six months prior to GS 2028.

Brothers, thank you for considering our request. We pray the Lord to equip you all with his wisdom and grace to decide well upon this and all matters on your agenda.

Yours in the Lord,  
On behalf of Ancaster council,  
Rob Wieske (clerk)

## Appendix 22 – Reports re finances of GS 2022

### General Synod 2022 - Financial Summary Report

Revenue	Budget	Actual		
		RSW	RSE	Total
	85,890.00	50,000.00	30,000.00	80,000.00
Funding from Regional Synods	-	18,279.09	7,889.97	26,169.06
Refund Excess Funds to Regional Synods	85,890.00	31,720.91	22,110.03	53,830.94
<b>Expenditures</b>				
Correspondence	533.00	1,424.76	1,424.76	2,849.52
Facilities	19,377.00	7,315.93	7,315.93	14,631.86
Hospitality - Food	8,520.00	3,898.71	3,898.71	7,797.43
Hospitality - Accomodations	-	-	-	-
Hospitality - Travel Local	1,598.00	125.38	125.38	250.76
<i>Hospitality - Travel Delegates (note 3)</i>	<i>16,973.00</i>	<i>10,168.31</i>	<i>755.14</i>	<i>10,923.45</i>
IT	18,889.00	5,754.98	5,754.98	11,509.95
<i>Lost Wage Reimbursement - Delegates (note 3)</i>	<i>20,000.00</i>	<i>2,000.00</i>	<i>2,250.00</i>	<i>4,250.00</i>
HST Unrecoverable (note 4)		964.48	585.13	1,549.61
GST Unrecoverable (note 5)		68.36	-	68.36
<b>Total Expenses Disbursed</b>	<b>85,890.00</b>	<b>31,720.91</b>	<b>22,110.03</b>	<b>53,830.94</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>

*1 All expenses are shared between the Regional Synods as outlined in General Synod Guelph 2022 - Act 42.*

*2 Accordingly all approved expenses are shared 50/50 with exception of cost for delegate to make attendance (travel and loss wages).*

*3 Lost Wage Reimbursement and Travel Cost to Travel to Convening Church is covered directly by delegating body at rates they each determine.*

*Refer to General Synod Guelph 2022 - Act 2 for delegates and their delegating body.*

*4 31% of HST expenses are unrecoverable for tax input credits.*

*5 50% of GST expenses are unrecoverable for tax input credits.*

Dear Synod Members,

The Genera! Synod Financials have been prepared by Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Guelph. By direction of the consistory of Living Word Canadian Reformed Church of Guelph, Shannon Jager and Jane Harlaar, members of Living Word's Finance Committee, have been asked to review these financials. From our audit, we have found that the books appear to be in good order and that, to the best of our knowledge, Emmanuel has met the guidelines as laid out in the Acts of GS Guelph- Emmanuel 2022-Draft 2.

Regards,

[signed]

Jane Harlaar

LW Finance Treasurer October 30, 2022

Shannon Jager

LW Finance Bookkeeper October 20, 2022

## Appendix 23 – General Fund Report

General Synod Aldergrove 2025

RE: Financial Report for General Fund from January 1, 2022 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024

Esteemed Brothers,

The church of Carman East was appointed by GS Guelph-Immanuel 2022, Article 32 to administer the General Fund and to collect funds as required from the churches.

An email address ([generalfundcarmaneast@gmail.com](mailto:generalfundcarmaneast@gmail.com)) is used for requests for reimbursement to the treasurer, and mail should be addressed to the Carman East church address at Box 164, Carman, MB R0G 0J0.

Sr. Hilly Kooiker was appointed as treasurer of this fund in 2019. At her request to be relieved of these duties, we have appointed sr. Jolene Bouwman to this task.

To administer this fund the churches were assessed per communicant member: 2022 - \$1, 2023 - \$4, 2024 - \$4. Further detail has been provided below.

### General Fund January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2024

Bank balance January 1, 2022	<b>35,650.33</b>
Assessment from the churches	99,366.87
	135,017.20

#### Expenses

Book of praise	2,237.18
CER	101,271.86
ICRC	7,534.31
Website comm	8,142.89
Premier Printing	10,482.33
Bank Charges	300.39
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>129,968.96</b>
	-129,968.96
	2,316.47 Acct Payable
<b>Bank Balance December 31, 2024</b>	<b>7,364.71</b>



Len Bergsma - Chairman



Jordan Vanderveen - Clerk

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## Appendix 24 – Press Release General Synod 2025

The night before Synod 2025 started, a prayer service took place at the Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church. Rev. John Ludwig, chairman of the previous synod, preached on 1 Timothy 3:15. His theme was: *“The Church of the living God is the pillar and buttress of the truth.”* The message focused on the church’s calling to confess and preserve the truth of the gospel in the world. Following the sermon, the worshipers prayed for God’s blessing on the upcoming synod.

### Opening

The next morning, the twenty-four delegates met in the church building at 9:00 a.m. On behalf of the convening church, Rev. Rob Schouten welcomed everyone. He also led the opening devotions. He read Colossians 1:1–20 and gave a meditation on verse 18a: “And he is the head of the body, the church.” The delegates joined in prayer, asking for God’s guidance over the deliberations and decisions of Synod.

The convening church examined the credentials from Regional Synods East and West and found them to be in good order. Rev. John Louwerse was elected as chairman, Rev. Rob Schouten as vice-chairman, Rev. Karlo Janssen as first clerk, and Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer as second clerk. Rev. Schouten then declared General Synod 2025 duly constituted.

The Chairman expressed gratitude for the extensive work carried out by the convening church. This included receiving correspondence and organizing a vast agenda, arranging hospitality for all delegates, coordinating three meals per day for delegates and fraternal representatives, and providing the necessary technical setup. As Synod progressed, the diligence and care of the host church became more and more evident.

Following a short adjournment, Synod formally adopted the agenda. The executive suggested a way to conduct the business of synod. Five advisory committees were appointed, each assigned a portion of the agenda. These committees were tasked with summarizing the issues, analyzing submissions, and preparing recommendations for discussion in plenary session. Much of the early part of Synod was occupied with committee work in preparation for those deliberations.

The main decisions of General Synod 2025 are summarized in the following paragraphs. For more details, readers should check the official *Acts of General Synod 2025*. You can find the provisional Acts at [www.canrc.org](http://www.canrc.org). In time, the official Acts will also appear there.

### Ecumenical relationships

In keeping with the mandate of the previous synod, the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) proposed a revision to Article 50 of the Church Order. The previous wording referred to relations with “churches abroad,” a phrase that no longer reflects the global and regional realities of our ecclesiastical ties. The CER recommended the following revised wording:

“Ecumenical relationships with other churches of Reformed confession shall be entered into where feasible and be maintained according to the rules adopted for this purpose by general synod. On minor points of ecclesiastical governance and practice churches shall not be rejected.”

Synod adopted this proposal.

Synod also approved a new classification system for ecumenical relationships. Churches with whom we have formal ecclesiastical fellowship (commonly known as “sister-church” relationships) are now categorized as either Category A (“intense contact”) or Category B (“less

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intense contact”). This distinction does not affect mutual recognition but reflects the level of interaction and the allocation of limited resources. In God’s providence, closer ties have developed with some churches, and these categories simply acknowledge that reality.

In addition to these two categories of ecclesiastical fellowship, a third category called “ecclesiastical contact” was affirmed. This category applies to churches of known Reformed character with whom full ecclesiastical fellowship is not yet feasible. In such cases, a relationship of mutual respect, dialogue, and cooperation is pursued with the goal of eventual closer fellowship.

Beyond these three levels—governed by what is now called “Rule 1”—Synod adopted a new provision referred to as “Rule 2.” This allows for more flexible local ecumenical engagement in cases where no formal ecclesiastical fellowship exists. Rule 2 permits the following, in accordance with adopted protocols:

1. Pulpit fellowship with the concurring advice of classis;
2. Reception of members at the Lord’s Supper according to local regulations;
3. Reception of members into the local congregation according to local regulations;
4. An account of these ecumenical activities to be given to the appropriate classis.

A highlight of Synod was the decision to establish ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Churches (The Netherlands) – GK, a new federation formed by the merger of two church groups that had previously separated from the Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt (GKv). In 2019, our churches were compelled to sever ties with the GKv, and it was therefore a joy to recognize and enter into fellowship with a faithful Reformed federation in the Netherlands (Category A). Rev. Rik Douma attended Synod as a credentialed delegate of the GK, addressed the assembly, and expressed gratitude for this newly established relationship.

Synod also decided to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), designated as Category B. While based largely in the United States, the ARPC includes twelve congregations in Canada, located in Ontario and New Brunswick. These Canadian churches are working toward forming their own federation. Rev. Aaron De Boer represented the ARPC and was given the opportunity to address Synod. Delegates rejoiced in the evident unity of faith and shared commitment between the two church bodies.

Fraternal delegates were received from a number of sister churches, including the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church in the United States, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Reformed Churches of Quebec (ERQ), and the United Reformed Churches of North America.

In addition, letters of greeting were received from the Free Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), the Reformed Churches in Indonesia, the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea, and the Reformed Churches of Brazil. Observers from the Free Reformed Churches of North America, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and the Heritage Reformed Congregations were also present and given the opportunity to address Synod.

Our confessions speak of the catholicity of the church, and this truth became tangible as Synod received greetings from churches across the world. It was a joy to hear about the worship and witness of Christ’s church on every continent.

## Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

Synod 2025 received the report of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) with thankfulness and approved its recommendations. Permission was granted to the Board to reappoint Dr. J. Van Vliet as Principal for another three-year term (2025–2028). Synod also acknowledged the importance of faculty succession planning, as three of five professors are expected to retire within a few years of one another, around the year 2035 (DV).

Several changes to the seminary's bylaws were adopted. These include: clarifying that all governors must be men eligible to serve as office-bearers in their local church; simplifying the process for appointing substitute governors; extending the time limit for completing a degree from five to seven years; and allowing adjunct professors to hold an appropriate master's degree rather than requiring a doctorate.

Synod approved the creation of a new bursary, the Advanced Theological Studies Assistance (ATSA), designed to help academically gifted CRTS graduates pursue further theological education with a view to potential future service as professors.

For many years, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) have strongly supported the work of CRTS. Synod took note that they continue to value CRTS highly but are exploring the possibility of establishing their own seminary—Australian Reformed Theological Seminary (ARTS)—though not before 2040. Of the four models under consideration, the FRCA is currently focusing on a partnership model in which ARTS would function as an affiliate of CRTS, overseen by an advisory committee rather than joint governance. This model avoids the need for legislative amendments in Ontario.

Synod also appointed new governors, approved financial reports, and expressed gratitude for the ongoing support of the churches, including contributions from the FRCA and the Women's Savings Action. A suggestion from the Toronto-Bethel church to add a sixth professor was noted but not adopted, as it had not followed the usual ecclesiastical route of church discussion.

## Revision of Article 30 of the Church Order

For many years, the churches in our federation have discussed how new matters may be brought to a general synod. The previous protocol required churches to follow the "ecclesiastical route": first submitting a matter to classis, then to regional synod, and only afterward to a general synod. This practice was based on Article 30 of the Church Order, which governs how matters are placed on the agenda of major assemblies.

In response to an overture from Regional Synod West 2024, Synod Aldergrove 2025 decided to revise the final sentence of Article 30. It now reads:

"A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly and is common to its churches may be put on the agenda by one of its churches."

This change means that a local church may submit a new matter directly to a major assembly—such as a general synod—provided the matter pertains to the churches in common and has not already been considered at that level. The Guidelines for General Synod were updated to reflect this change.

## Limits on hymns

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Synod 2025 made a significant decision in determining that the cap of 100 hymns in the Book of Praise was for the duration of past revisions only, and affirmed that the cap is currently null and void.

Seven churches had appealed Synod 2022's decision to maintain the cap, arguing that it lacked a solid basis and unnecessarily limited the churches' ability to include edifying hymns and alternate Psalm settings. Synod agreed, concluding that Synod 2022 had improperly placed the burden of proof on those seeking change by requiring them to demonstrate that the 2004 decision was erroneous—a standard that does not apply to overtures proposing something new.

Synod further judged that supporting the singing of Psalms does not require restricting the number of hymns, and that expanding the hymn section can serve the churches while continuing to honour the place of the Psalms.

### **Article 55 of the Church Order**

Synod 2025 received overtures from both Regional Synod East and Regional Synod West requesting a revision of Article 55 of the Church Order, which governs the use of psalms and hymns in worship. After careful consideration, Synod adopted a new version of the article, as recorded in Article 115 of the Acts. The revised wording reads:

“The 150 Psalms of the Bible are foundational to the church’s worship, and are to be sung frequently in the worship services. General Synod shall adopt metrical versions of the psalms and shall approve hymns for inclusion in a song book which shall, as a rule, have the principal place in the worship of the church. The Consistory may also approve the singing of alternate settings of the psalms and additional hymns, provided they are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity.”

### **Additions to the Songbook**

Synod approved the inclusion of nineteen alternate psalm settings. Thirty-one hymns previously tested by the churches were also approved for inclusion. These selections will be published in an authorized *augment* to be used alongside the existing *Book of Praise*. These new songs may be incorporated into a future edition of the *Book of Praise* when it is reprinted.

### **Changes to the Form for Profession of Faith and Baptism**

In Article 184, Synod 2025 considered an overture from Blessings Christian Church and Classis Central Ontario requesting changes to the wording used in the Forms for Public Profession of Faith, Infant Baptism, and Adult Baptism. The overture proposed a return to language used prior to 1983. At that time, the first question in the Profession of Faith Form read:

“Do you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testament and in the articles of the Christian faith and which is taught here in this Christian church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?”

In 1983, this was changed to:

“First, do you wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian church?

The 2025 overture argued that the change made in 1983 was not merely a shift in terminology but introduced a different emphasis. It recommended a return to a formulation more consistent with historic Reformed liturgies, which present the Apostles' Creed as the primary summary of

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the Christian faith. Synod agreed and adopted a revision of the phrase “summarized in the confessions” to “summarized in the Apostles’ Creed” in the relevant liturgical forms.

While reaffirming the church’s expectation that members adhere to and are bound to both the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions, Synod concluded that the revised wording more faithfully reflects the original intent of the profession and baptismal questions and provides greater clarity in a pastoral setting.

### **Shorter Forms for the Lord’s Supper**

In response to a mandate from Synod 2022, Synod 2025 evaluated two proposed shorter forms for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, prepared by the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP). These forms were designed to be Reformed in character, aligned in content with the existing forms, and significantly shorter than the current abbreviated form.

Synod decided to provisionally adopt both Short Form #1 and Short Form #2 for use in the churches. These forms are to be used on a trial basis and are not yet final. Churches are encouraged to make use of them and to submit feedback based on their experience. A newly established ad hoc *Committee on Liturgical Forms* has been tasked with collecting and evaluating that feedback, refining the forms as needed, and reporting to the next general synod with recommendations regarding their adoption, revision, or discontinuation.

### **Form for Infant Baptism**

Synod 2025 considered an overture from Regional Synod West proposing a revised Form for the Baptism of Infants. The overture expressed concerns about the current form’s sentence complexity, formal tone, length, occasional lack of clarity, and outdated language.

Recognizing that many of the concerns raised were valid, Synod determined that a formal revision process should be entrusted to a synodically appointed committee, with input from the churches. Synod also observed that similar issues likely exist in the Form for the Baptism of Adults, given its parallel structure.

Accordingly, Synod appointed an ad hoc three-person committee to review both baptism forms. The committee was mandated to evaluate clarity, language, structure, and doctrinal fidelity, to consider consistency with related forms, and to propose revisions. A draft version is to be distributed to the churches at least 15 months before the next general synod, with the final report submitted no later than six months before synod convenes.

### **Footnote to the Apostles’ Creed**

Synod 2025 considered an overture from Regional Synod East requesting that an explanatory footnote be added to the phrase “he descended into hell” in the Apostles’ Creed. The overture proposed clarifying that these words do not mean that Christ descended to the place of eternal torment after his death, but rather express the depth of his suffering, as understood in Lord’s Day 16 of the Heidelberg Catechism (Q&A 44).

After discussion, Synod decided not to adopt the proposed footnote. While acknowledging that the phrase has long been a subject of theological discussion, Synod judged that adding a footnote to the Creed itself was not the best way to address the concern. Instead, such matters are better handled through faithful preaching, catechesis, and instruction in the confessions.

### **Conclusion**

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The work of Synod was completed in ten days. We give thanks to the Lord for granting perseverance to the delegates. The meetings were conducted in a spirit of brotherly harmony and mutual respect. We express appreciation for the gracious leadership of Rev. John Louwerse as chairman. It is our prayer that the decisions made at Synod will serve the well-being of Christ's church and contribute to the unity and vitality of our federation in the years to come. Soli Deo Gloria.

R. Schouten

Vice-chairman of Synod 2025

## Appendix 25 – Guidelines for General Synod<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Convening and Constitution of Synod

- 1.1 The convening church<sup>2</sup> shall set the date on which synod shall meet (cf. CO Art. 49). It shall give notice of this date to all the churches of the federation *two years* in advance of the date for the next general synod. It shall also publish this date at [www.canrc.org](http://www.canrc.org).

The convening church shall publish the date along with the rule:

All material for general synod should be received by the convening church in paper or digital format (searchable text PDF as much as feasible) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of general synod. Those submitting material shall ensure that one signed copy is available for the archives of General Synod.<sup>3</sup> Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.<sup>4</sup>

- 1.2.1 The convening church shall take responsibility for preparing a provisional agenda for synod. To this end, it shall receive and organize all submissions in an orderly and transparent manner. This includes:

- 1.2.1.1 Creating a synod-specific email address for all synod-related correspondence and submissions.
- 1.2.1.2 Acknowledging receipt of submissions and maintaining a tracking log that records the source, subject, date received, and format of each item.
- 1.2.1.3 Assigning each submission to a suitable agenda category (e.g., reports, overtures, appeals, correspondence) and assigning each item a unique provisional agenda number.
- 1.2.1.4 Standardizing document formats (e.g., searchable PDF) and applying consistent file naming conventions that reflect the agenda number, topic, source, and date.

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<sup>1</sup> Given changes made by GS 2025 to these Guidelines and given that the Guidelines used a ‘numbering’ system that mixed Roman numerals, letters, and Arabic numerals, the executive decided post GS 2025 to renumber the Guidelines using just Arabic numerals.

<sup>2</sup> GS 2022 adopted a further set of Guidelines for the Convening Church. See GS 2022 Appendix 29.

<sup>3</sup> GS 2019 Art. 122, among others replacing a change made by GS 2013 Art. 176.

<sup>4</sup> GS 1995 Art. 111; GS 2004 Art. 118.

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- 1.2.1.5 Coordinating with the federation's website committee to ensure that all public materials are posted consistently and accessibly while also ensuring confidentiality of delegate-only items.
- 1.2.1.6 Preparing a shared digital folder system for synod delegates, organized by agenda categories and item numbers, containing all submitted materials in downloadable form.
- 1.2.1.7 Distributing the provisional agenda and supporting materials as follows:
  - 1.2.1.7.1 To all synod delegates: the full agenda with hyperlinks to all supporting documents, including appeals and church correspondence.
  - 1.2.1.7.2 To all churches and the federation's website: the full agenda with hyperlinks only to public materials (i.e., reports and overtures). Items such as appeals or correspondence from individual churches are to be listed in the agenda but not made publicly available.
  - 1.2.1.7.3 Sending the provisional agenda to the churches and federation website 6 months and 6 weeks before synod.
  - 1.2.1.7.4 Sending provisional agendas to the delegates at intervals of approximately 6 months, 4 months, 3 months, and 6 weeks prior to synod.<sup>5</sup>
- 1.3<sup>6</sup> Correspondence from the convening church, including the notice of convocation, agendas, reports, and proposals may be sent to the churches and/or delegates as digital files. However, in order to maintain the confidentiality of potentially sensitive material, personal appeals as well as other documents which contain personal information (e.g., letters of appointment) must be sent from the convening church as password-protected digital files.<sup>7</sup>
- 1.4 The convening church shall send the first provisional agenda to all the churches at least six months prior to convocation.
- 1.5 All material submitted to the convening church together with a copy of the current *Guidelines for General Synods* shall be sent to all delegates and the first alternates.<sup>8</sup> All material submitted to synod, including reports, appeals, and overtures which quote any foreign language source must provide in the text of the submission a full English translation and in a footnote the citation in the original language.<sup>9</sup>
- 1.6 All material for synod should be received by the convening church in paper or digital format (searchable text PDF as much as feasible) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of general synod. Those submitting material shall ensure that one signed copy is available for the archives of general synod.<sup>10</sup> Material received after this

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<sup>5</sup> GS 2019 Art. 122, GS 2025 Art. 185. Given it's own subsection number in 2025.

<sup>6</sup> What is now 1.3 was I.B in the 2022 Guidelines, 1.4 was I.C, and so on.

<sup>7</sup> GS 2013 Art. 176.

<sup>8</sup> GS 1986 Art. 76; GS 1995 Art. 111.

<sup>9</sup> GS 1989 Art. 131.

<sup>10</sup> GS 2019 Art. 122, among others replacing a change made by GS 2013 Art. 176.

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date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.<sup>11</sup>

- 1.7 For matters common to the churches of the general synod, whether “new” (CO article 30) or “once decided upon” (CO article 33), individual churches may address proposals directly to general synod with the requirement that all such submissions are sent also to each church in the federation no later than twelve (12) months prior to general synod.<sup>12</sup>
- 1.8 The minister of the convening church or its counselor shall act as chairman until synod has been constituted.
  - 1.8.1 He shall call the meeting to order in an ecclesiastical manner (cf. Art. 34, CO);
  - 1.8.2. He shall have the credentials examined as to whether general synod can be constituted.
- 1.9 Officers of synod shall be chosen by ballot in this order: chairman, vice-chairman, first clerk, and second clerk, with consideration made to avoid the reappointment of the same individuals to the same position for more than two (2) consecutive synods. Election to office is to be by majority of valid votes cast.<sup>13</sup>
- 1.10 Although advice can be requested in particular matters, advisory members shall not be appointed.<sup>14</sup>
- 1.11 The convening church shall arrange to have people present during synod to assist the clerks in preparing the *Acts* and to do other paperwork.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Duties of the Officers

### 2.1 The Chairman

- 2.1.1 The chairman shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and is expedited as much as possible, and that members observe the rules of order and decorum (cf. CO 34, 35).
- 2.1.2 He shall call the meeting to order at the appointed time, call the roll and shall see to it that each session is properly opened and closed.
- 2.1.3 He shall welcome fraternal delegates or other guests and respond to greetings received or appoint other members for this purpose.
- 2.1.4 He shall place before synod every motion that is made and seconded, in accord with the accepted order; and he shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken, so that every member may know on what he is voting.
- 2.1.5 If the chairman feels the need to speak on a pending question, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice-chairman for that period of time. While holding the chair, he may speak to state matters of fact or to inform synod regarding points of order.

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<sup>11</sup> GS 1986 Art. 162; GS 1995 Art. 110.

<sup>12</sup> GS 2025 Art. 176.

<sup>13</sup> GS 2025 Art. 139.

<sup>14</sup> GS 2007, Art. 147.

<sup>15</sup> GS 2010, Art. 174.

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- 2.1.6 He shall have, and duly exercise, the prerogative of declaring a motion or a person out of order. If his ruling is challenged, it shall be submitted to synod for decision by majority vote.
- 2.1.7 The chairman shall retain his right to vote on any question.
- 2.1.8 In case of a point of order, the chairman must make a ruling at once. This ruling may be reversed by a majority of synod, if any member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair and appeals to the floor.
- 2.1.9 The chairman shall close the synod with appropriate remarks and prayer (CO 34).

## 2.2 The Vice-Chairman

- 2.2.1 The vice-chairman shall, in the absence of the chairman, assume all his duties and privileges.
- 2.2.2 The vice-chairman shall render all possible assistance to the chairman as circumstances require.
- 2.2.3 He shall prepare the press release.

## 2.3 The First Clerk

- 2.3.1 Every morning, after the roll call, he shall present the *Acts* of the previous day.
- 2.3.2 He shall keep a proper record of the business of synod. This record should ordinarily contain:
  - 2.3.2.1 The opening and closing of sessions and roll call.
  - 2.3.2.2 All motions whether carried or defeated.
  - 2.3.2.3 All final reports of committees and all decisions of synod.
  - 2.3.2.4 Any document or part of debate or address that synod by a majority vote has decided to insert in the *Acts*.
- 2.3.3 He shall not include in the *Acts* any motion that was withdrawn.

## 2.4 The Second Clerk

- 2.4.1 The second clerk shall serve in the absence of the first clerk.
- 2.4.2 He shall render assistance to the first clerk as circumstances require.
- 2.4.3 He shall handle outgoing mail on behalf of synod.

# 3. Synodical Committees

## 3.1 Advisory Committees of Synod

- 3.1.1 The officers of synod shall propose advisory committees, with a convener, to serve for the duration of synod.
- 3.1.2 The officers of synod shall propose an arrangement of matters on the agenda to the appropriate committees.
- 3.1.3 All reports shall be distributed in ample time before they are presented for discussion.
- 3.1.4 The committee reporter shall present the reports.
- 3.1.5 If there is a minority report as well as a majority report, both reports shall be given into discussion, but the majority report shall be voted upon first.

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- 3.1.6 During the discussion, the task of defending the report shall rest primarily with the reporter of the committee. Other committee members shall receive the privilege of the floor to elaborate on or clarify any point.
- 3.1.7 In order to facilitate the discussion on a pending issue, the chair shall ordinarily call for the discussion in two parts (rounds). In the first part opportunity is given to members to express remarks related to the issue in question. In the second or following parts, members may react to the discussion or the issue in question.
- 3.1.8 The discussion may be extended by discretion of the chairman or by a decision of Synod.
- 3.1.9 If anyone has been requested to advise synod on any matter, he shall address synod on this point only when asked to do so by the chair.

### 3.2 (Inter-)Synod Committees

- 3.2.1 All committees appointed by synod shall see to it that they send a copy of their report in digital format to each of the local churches.<sup>16</sup>

## 4. Rules of Order

### 4.1 Closed Sessions of Synod

- 4.1.1 A closed session shall ordinarily mean a session where members of synod and office-bearers may be present. This shall be used in delicate or unusual situations.
- 4.1.2 A closed-restricted session shall, as a rule, mean a session where members of synod only may be present. This shall only take place when synod judges that such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honour or the welfare of the churches in extremely delicate situations.

### 4.2 Main Motions

A main motion is one which presents a certain subject for consideration or action.

- 4.2.1 A main motion is acceptable under the following conditions:

- 4.2.1.1 The mover has been recognized by the chair.
  - 4.2.1.2 The motion has been seconded.
  - 4.2.1.3 The motion is also presented in writing.

- 4.2.2 A main motion is not acceptable if another main motion is before synod or if it conflicts with any decision already made by synod.

- 4.2.3 A notice of motion may be given during the discussion.

### 4.3 A Motion to Amend

This is a proposal to alter a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the motion.

- 4.1.1 A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute certain words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs.
- 4.1.2 A motion to amend is not a proper amendment if it nullifies the main motion or is not germane to it.

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<sup>16</sup> GS 1995 Art. 110; GS 2013 Art. 176.

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4.1.3 A motion to amend an amendment is permissible and is called a secondary motion.

**4.4 Call for a Division of the Question**

At the request of one or more members of synod, a motion consisting of more than one part must be divided and voted upon separately, unless synod decides that this is not necessary.

**4.5 Objection to Consideration of a Question**

If any member is not satisfied with the ruling of the chair, the matter is referred to synod for a decision.

**4.6 Right of Protest**

It is the right of any member to protest against any decision of synod. Protest should be registered immediately, or during the session in which the matter concerned was acted upon. Protests must be registered individually and not in groups. Members may, if they feel the need, ask to have their negative vote recorded. Such requests must be made immediately after the vote is taken.

**4.7 Motion to Bring Matters Once Decided Again Before Synod**

Any member of synod, for weighty reasons, may move to have a matter reconsidered, which was previously decided. The purpose of this motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote.

**4.8 Discussion**

4.8.1 To obtain the floor, a speaker must be recognized by the chair.

4.8.2 If any member has spoken twice on a pending issue, others who have not yet spoken twice shall, as a rule, be given priority by the chair.

4.8.3 When the chairman believes that a motion under consideration has been debated sufficiently, he may propose cessation of debate. If a majority of synod sustains his proposal, discussion shall cease and the vote shall be taken.

4.8.4 Any member of synod, when he deems a matter to have been debated sufficiently, may move to close the discussion. Should a majority be in favour, the vote shall be taken, but only after those who have already requested the floor have been recognized.

**4.9 Voting**

4.9.1 It is in the freedom of the chair to determine how the vote is to be taken: by calling the roll (in any order) or by show of hands.<sup>17</sup>

4.9.2 Voting about persons shall be by ballot.

4.9.3 Voting about delicate matters and other matters of a critical nature shall also be by ballot.

**5. Revision**

These *Guidelines for General Synod* may be suspended, amended, revised or abrogated by a majority vote of Synod.

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<sup>17</sup> GS 2010 Art. 174.

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**Appendix 26 – Guidelines for the Convening Church of a General Synod Regarding Synod Expenses**

*Last revised: GS 2022*

1. **Funding:** The convening church shall set up a General Synod Account and appoint a treasurer. The treasurer shall contact the treasurers of the regional synods for funding to cover all expenses pertaining to the general synod. Expenses will be shared between the two regional synods on a 50/50 basis. (See Yearbook for treasurers of each regional synod).
2. **Operational Expenses:** Operational expenses incurred as a direct result of hosting the general synod which do not have a net benefit post-synod to the convening church will be reimbursed at cost. This includes but is not limited to IT, facilities, and correspondence.
3. **Travel for fraternal delegates and invited observers as invited by the interchurch relations committee(s):**
  - 3.1 **Travel to synod:** Cost for travel is the responsibility of the delegating body.
  - 3.2 **Transportation during synod:** The convening church will arrange transportation to and from the airport, train station, or bus depot and provide transportation to general synod and incidental travel during the synod. Submission for costs incurred in providing transportation in connection with general synod are to be reimbursed at the CRA rate.
4. **Accommodations:** For delegates, fraternal delegates and invited observers as invited by the interchurch relation committee(s):
  - 4.1 Accommodations are arranged by the convening church via rental and/or billeting. Accommodations can include support for the spouse of a delegate;
  - 4.2 Submissions for reimbursement of the rentals are administered via the general synod budget administered by the convening church.
5. **Meals:**
  - 5.1 Meals are exclusively for the members of general synod and invited guests via the venue of the general synod or arranged by the convening church via billeting;
  - 5.2 Reimbursements for meal expenses are administered via the general synod budget administered by the convening church.
6. At the conclusion of synod, the books will be reviewed by the church appointed for that purpose. A financial report is to be submitted to the next general synod.

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## Appendix 27 – Rules for Ecumenical Relationships

### Rule 1

#### Level 1 – Ecclesiastical Fellowship

At a federative level, the following shall apply by decision of General Synod:

**Ecclesiastical Fellowship – Category A** is with other churches of Reformed confession according to CO art. 50. This relationship is maintained with churches with which we have **intense contact**. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

- (1) Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
- (2) The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting Christian unity and whenever feasible striving for ecclesiastical unity.
- (3) Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
- (4) Pulpit fellowship.
- (5) Reception of members at the Lord's supper according to local regulations.
- (6) Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
- (7) Consultation on issues of joint concern, particularly prior to instituting changes in doctrine, worship and governance which might affect the basis of the fellowship.
- (8) Joint action in areas of common responsibility.
- (9) Exchange of relevant ecclesiastical materials, including:
  - a. The Minutes/Acts of major assemblies;
  - b. Yearbooks/Directories of the churches;
  - c. The most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards;
  - d. The most recent published edition of the Church Order;
  - e. The most recently published edition of an approved psalter, or psalter-hymnal.

**Ecclesiastical Fellowship - Category B** is with other churches of Reformed confession according to CO art. 50. This relationship is maintained with churches with whom we have **less intense contact** for geographical, linguistic, or historical reasons. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

- (1) Welcome of fraternal observers at appropriate major assemblies.
- (2) Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
- (3) Pulpit fellowship.
- (4) Reception of members at the Lord's supper according to local regulations.
- (5) Reception of members into the local congregation, according to according to local regulations.
- (6) Communication on issues of joint concern.
- (7) Review relevant ecclesiastical materials and monitor faithfulness to the Reformed confessions.

#### Level 2 – Ecclesiastical Contact

**Ecclesiastical Contact** is with other churches of Reformed confession with which we do not have Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Such churches may include churches with membership in

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NAPARC, or the ICRC, as well as other churches as determined by general synod. This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

- (1) Meetings, both formal and informal, of delegates to the meetings of NAPARC and the ICRC and on other occasions that may arise.
- (2) Mutual labours as members of NAPARC and the ICRC in the discharge of the purposes of the council/conference.
- (3) Welcome of fraternal observers at major assemblies.
- (4) Other duties as directed by general synod.

The Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) shall periodically review our ecumenical relationships to ensure we are honouring our commitments to each other. Furthermore, the CER may make recommendations, without prejudice, to General Synod regarding the optimal placement of federations within these categories.

**Rule 2**

In circumstances where no Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Rule 1, Level 1) exists, churches may engage in ecumenical relationships with other local churches of Reformed confession as per CO art. 50, in accordance with the following protocols:

- (1) Pulpit fellowship may occur with the concurring advice of classis.
- (2) Reception of members at the Lord's supper according to local regulations.
- (3) Reception of members into the local congregation according to local regulations.
- (4) Churches shall give an account of their ecumenical activities to their respective classis.



*Some of the fraternal delegates at GS 2025 with the Executive.*

*From left to right: Y. Dethan, R. Douma, J. Bruintjes, W. Bredenhof, A. de Boer, A. Souman, T. Grassmid, B. Pascal K. Janssen, J. Louwerse, R. Schouten, P. Holtvliwer*

# Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches

As last revised by GS 2025

## I. Introduction

### ARTICLE 1: Purpose and Division

For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary that there be offices and supervision of doctrine; assemblies; worship, sacraments, and ceremonies; and discipline.

## II. Offices and Supervision of Doctrine

### ARTICLE 2: The Offices

The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon.

### ARTICLE 3: The Calling to Office

No one shall take any office upon himself without having been lawfully called thereto.

Only male members who have made profession of faith and may be considered to meet the conditions as set forth in Holy Scripture (e.g., in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1) shall be eligible for office.

The election to any office shall take place with the cooperation of the congregation, after preceding prayers, and according to the regulations adopted for that purpose by the consistory with the deacons.

The consistory with the deacons shall be free to give the congregation the opportunity beforehand to draw the attention of the consistory to brothers deemed fit for the respective offices.

The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation either as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled, or at the most twice as many, from which number the congregation shall choose as many as are needed.

Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons in accordance with the adopted regulations.

Prior to the ordination or installation the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for its approbation on at least two consecutive Sundays.

The ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the relevant forms.

### ARTICLE 4: Eligibility for the Ministry

#### A. Eligibility

Only those shall be called to the office of minister of the Word who

1. have been declared eligible for call by the churches;
2. are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; or
3. have been declared eligible in, or are serving in, one of the churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain a sister-church relationship.

#### B. Declared Eligible

Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who

1. have passed a preparatory examination by classis, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the documents necessary to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches;
2. have served in churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship, and have been well tested for a reasonable period of time and examined by the classis in which they live, with due observance of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for that purpose; or
3. have been examined according to the rule described in Article 8.

C. Calling Twice

The approval of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

D. Counsellor

When a vacant church extends a call, the advice of the counsellor shall be sought.

## ARTICLE 5: Ordination and Installation of Ministers of the Word

A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry before, the following shall be observed:

1. They shall be ordained only after classis has approved the call. Classis shall approve the call
  - a. upon satisfactory testimony concerning the soundness of doctrine and conduct of the candidate, signed by the consistory of the church to which he belongs;
  - b. upon a peremptory examination of the candidate by classis with satisfactory results. This examination shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of the regional synod.
2. For the ordination they shall show also to the consistory good testimonials concerning their doctrine and conduct from the church(es) to which they have belonged since their preparatory examination.

B. Regarding those who are serving in the ministry the following shall be observed:

1. They shall be installed after classis has approved the call.

For this approbation as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration from the consistory with the deacons and from classis that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that church and classis, or from the church only, in case he remains within the same classis.

2. For the approbation by classis of a call to those who are serving in one of the churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain a sister-church relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

C. Further, for the approbation by classis of a call, the calling church shall submit a declaration that the proper announcements have been made and that the congregation has given its approval to the call.

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**ARTICLE 6: Bound to a Church**

No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church, either to be stationed in a certain place, or to be sent out for the gathering of the church from among the heathen or from among those who have become estranged from the gospel, or to be charged with some other special ministerial task.

**ARTICLE 7: Recent Converts**

No one who has recently come to the confession of the Reformed religion shall be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and has been carefully examined by classis with the cooperation of the deputies of the regional synod.

**ARTICLE 8: Exceptional Gifts**

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech.

When such persons present themselves for the ministry, classis, after the approval of regional synod, shall examine them in a preparatory examination and allow them to speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis; and further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, with observance of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

**ARTICLE 9: From One Church to Another**

A minister, once lawfully called, shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of the consistory with the deacons and the approval of classis.

On the other hand, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church and the classis where he served, or of the church only, if he remains within the same classis.

**ARTICLE 10: Proper Support**

The consistory with the deacons, as representing the congregation, shall be bound to provide for the proper support of its minister(s).

**ARTICLE 11: Dismissal**

If a minister of the Word is judged unfit and incapable of serving the congregation fruitfully and to its edification, without there being any reason for church discipline, the consistory with the deacons shall not dismiss him from his service within the congregation without the approbation of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, and not without proper arrangements regarding the support of the minister and his family for a reasonable period of time.

If no call is forthcoming in three years, he shall be declared released from his ministerial status by the classis in which he served last.

**ARTICLE 12: Bound for Life**

Inasmuch as a minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life, he is not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and

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substantial reasons, of which the consistory with the deacons shall judge, and which shall receive the approval of classis with the concurring advice of deputies of regional synod.

#### **ARTICLE 13: Retirement of Ministers**

If a minister of the Word retires because of age, or because he is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office on account of illness or physical or mental disability, he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last, and this church shall provide honourably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and/or dependents.

Retirement of a minister shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and with the concurring advice of classis and of deputies of regional synod.

#### **ARTICLE 14: Temporary Release**

If a minister, because of illness or for other substantial reasons, requests a temporary release from his service to the congregation, he can receive the same only with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and shall at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.

#### **ARTICLE 15: Preaching in Other Places**

No one shall be permitted to preach the Word or to administer the sacraments in another church without the consent of the consistory of that church.

#### **ARTICLE 16: The Office of Ministers of the Word**

The specific duties of the office of minister of the Word are thoroughly and sincerely to proclaim to the congregation the Word of the Lord, to administer the sacraments, and publicly to call upon the name of God in behalf of the whole congregation; also to instruct the children of the church in the doctrine of salvation, to visit the members of the congregation in their homes, and to comfort the sick with the Word of God; and further, with the elders, to keep the church of God in good order, to exercise discipline, and to govern it in such a manner as the Lord has ordained.

#### **ARTICLE 17: Equality Among the Ministers of the Word**

Among the ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of classis.

#### **ARTICLE 18: Missionaries**

When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall be and remain subject to the Church Order. They shall report and give account of their labours to the church which sent them and shall at all times remain subject to its calling.

It shall be their task, in the specific region assigned to them or chosen by them in consultation with the church that sent them, to proclaim the Word of God, to administer the sacraments to those who have come to the profession of their faith, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded his church, and to ordain elders and deacons when this appears feasible, according to the rules given in the Word of God.

#### **ARTICLE 19: Training for the Ministry**

The churches shall maintain an institution for the training for the ministry. The task of the professors of theology is to instruct the students of theology in those disciplines which have been

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entrusted to them, so that the churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfil the duties of their office as these have been described above.

### **ARTICLE 20: Students of Theology**

The churches shall endeavour that there be students of theology, extending financial aid to those who are in need of it.

### **ARTICLE 21: An Edifying Word**

Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying word, others may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations, for their own training and in order that they may become known to the congregations.

### **ARTICLE 22: The Office of Elder**

The specific duties of the office of elder are, together with the ministers of the Word, to have supervision over Christ's church, that every member may conduct himself properly in doctrine and life according to the gospel; and faithfully to visit the members of the congregation in their homes to comfort, instruct, and admonish them with the Word of God, reproving those who behave improperly. They shall exercise Christian discipline according to the command of Christ against those who show themselves unbelieving and ungodly and refuse to repent and shall watch that the sacraments are not profaned. Being stewards of the house of God, they are further to take care that in the congregation all things are done decently and in good order, and to tend the flock of Christ which is in their charge. Finally, it is the duty of elders to assist the ministers of the Word with good counsel and advice and to supervise their doctrine and conduct.

### **ARTICLE 23: The Office of Deacon**

The specific duties of the office of deacon are to see to the good progress of the service of charity in the congregation; to acquaint themselves with existing needs and difficulties and exhort the members of Christ's body to show mercy; and further, to gather and manage the offerings and distribute them in Christ's name according to need. They shall encourage and comfort with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's love, and promote with word and deed the unity and fellowship in the Holy Spirit which the congregation enjoys at the table of the Lord.

### **ARTICLE 24: Term of Office**

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years, according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The place of the retiring office-bearers shall be taken by others, unless the consistory with the deacons judges that the circumstances and the benefit of the church render it advisable to have them serve another term, or to extend their term, or to declare them immediately eligible for re-election.

### **ARTICLE 25: Equality to Be Maintained**

Among the elders as well as among the deacons equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office, and also, as far as possible, in other matters, of which the consistory shall judge.

### **ARTICLE 26: Subscription to the Confession**

All ministers of the Word, elders, deacons, and professors of theology shall subscribe to the confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches by signing the form(s) adopted for that purpose.

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Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall, because of that very fact, be immediately suspended from office by the consistory with the deacons, and classis shall not receive him. If he obstinately persists in his refusal, he shall be deposed from office.

### **ARTICLE 27: False Doctrine**

To ward off false doctrines and errors which could enter the congregation and constitute a danger to the purity of its doctrine or conduct, the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning, and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in Christian teaching and family visiting.

### **ARTICLE 28: Civil Authorities**

As it is the office of the civil authorities to promote in every way the holy ministry, so all office-bearers are in duty bound to impress diligently and sincerely upon the whole congregation the obedience, love, and respect which are due to the civil authorities; they shall set a good example to the whole congregation in this matter, and endeavour by due respect and communication to secure and retain the favour of the authorities towards the church, so that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

## **III. The Assemblies**

### **ARTICLE 29: The Ecclesiastical Assemblies**

Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod.

### **ARTICLE 30: Ecclesiastical Matters**

These assemblies shall deal with no other than ecclesiastical matters and that in an ecclesiastical manner.

A major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common.

A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly and is common to its churches may be put on the agenda by one of its churches.

### **ARTICLE 31: Appeals**

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.

### **ARTICLE 32: Credentials**

Delegates to the major assemblies shall bring with them their credentials, signed by those sending them; they shall have a vote in all matters except those in which either they themselves or their churches are particularly involved.

### **ARTICLE 33: Proposals**

Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.

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**ARTICLE 34: Proceedings**

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with calling upon the name of the Lord. At the close of major assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof, or who have scorned the admonition of the minor assemblies. Furthermore, each classis, regional synod, or general synod shall determine the time and place of the next classis, regional synod, or general synod respectively and appoint the convening church for that meeting.

**ARTICLE 35: President**

In all assemblies there shall be a president whose task it is to present and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with, to ensure that every one observe due order in speaking, to deny the floor to those who argue about minor things or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their strong emotions, and to discipline those who refuse to listen.

In major assemblies the office of the president shall cease when the assembly has ended.

**ARTICLE 36: Clerk**

A clerk shall be appointed whose task it shall be to keep an accurate record of all things worthy to be recorded.

**ARTICLE 37: Jurisdiction**

The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the regional synod has over the classis, and the general synod over the regional synod.

**ARTICLE 38: Consistory**

In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the ministers of the Word and the elders who, as a rule, shall meet at least once a month. As a rule the ministers of the Word shall preside. If a church is served by more than one minister, they shall preside in turn.

**ARTICLE 39: Consistory and the Deacons**

Where the number of elders is small, the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement; this shall invariably be done where the number of elders or the number of deacons is less than three.

**ARTICLE 40: Constitution of a Consistory**

In places where a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, this shall be done only with the advice of classis.

**ARTICLE 41: Places without a Consistory**

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by classis to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

**ARTICLE 42: Meetings of Deacons**

When the deacons meet separately, as a rule once a month, to deal with the matters pertaining to their office, they shall do so with calling upon the name of God. They shall give account of their labours to the consistory.

The ministers shall acquaint themselves with the work of the ministry of mercy and, if need be, may visit these meetings.

**ARTICLE 43: Archives**

The consistories and the major assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.

**ARTICLE 44: Classis**

Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating, with proper credentials, a minister and an elder, or, if a church has no minister, two elders. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighbouring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches which would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall, however, not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

In these meetings the ministers shall preside in rotation, or one shall be chosen to preside; however, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession.

The president shall ask whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church.

The last classis before regional synod shall choose the delegates to that synod.

If two or more ministers are serving a church, those who have not been delegated shall have the right to attend classis in an advisory capacity.

**ARTICLE 45: Counsellors**

Each vacant church shall request classis to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such, to the end that he may assist the consistory in maintaining good order and especially may lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister; he shall also sign the letter of call.

**ARTICLE 46: Church Visitors**

Each year classis shall authorize at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit the churches in that year.

It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained in every respect, in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church.

They shall submit a written report of their visits to classis.

**ARTICLE 47: Regional Synod**

Each year some neighbouring classes shall send delegates to meet in a regional synod. If there are two classes, each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders. If there are three classes, the number shall be three ministers and three elders. If there are four or more classes, the number shall be two ministers and two elders.

If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of classis.

The last regional synod before the general synod shall choose delegates to that general synod.

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**ARTICLE 48: Deputies of Regional Synod**

Each regional synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order, and, upon the request of the classes, in cases of special difficulties.

These deputies shall keep proper record of their actions and submit a written report to regional synod, and, if so required, they shall give account of their actions.

They shall not be discharged from their task before and until regional synod itself discharges them.

**ARTICLE 49: General Synod**

The general synod shall be held once every three years. Each regional synod shall delegate to this synod six ministers and six elders.

If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of regional synod.

**ARTICLE 50: Ecumenical relationships**

Ecumenical relationships with other churches of Reformed confession shall be entered into where feasible and be maintained according to the rules adopted for this purpose by general synod. On minor points of ecclesiastical governance and practice churches shall not be rejected.

**ARTICLE 51: Mission**

The churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task.

When churches cooperate in this matter, they shall, as much as possible, observe the division into classes and regional synods.

**IV. Worship, Sacraments, and Ceremonies****ARTICLE 52: Worship Services**

The consistory shall call the congregation together for worship twice on the Lord's day.

The consistory shall ensure that, as a rule, once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed.

**ARTICLE 53: Days of Commemoration**

Each year the churches shall, in the manner decided upon by the consistory, commemorate the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as his outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

**ARTICLE 54: Days of Prayer**

In time of war, general calamities, and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the churches, a day of prayer may be proclaimed by the churches appointed for that purpose by general synod.

**ARTICLE 55: Psalms and Hymns**

The 150 Psalms of the Bible are foundational to the church's worship and are to be sung frequently in the worship services. General synod shall adopt metrical versions of the Psalms and shall approve hymns for inclusion in a song book which shall, as a rule, have the principal place in the worship of the church. The consistory may also approve the singing of alternate settings of the psalms and additional hymns, provided they are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity.

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**ARTICLE 56: Administration of Sacraments**

The sacraments shall be administered only under the authority of the consistory, in a public worship service, by a minister of the Word, with the use of the adopted forms.

**ARTICLE 57: Baptism**

The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as feasible.

**ARTICLE 58: Schools**

The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her confessions.

**ARTICLE 59: Baptism of Adults**

Adults who have not been baptized shall be incorporated into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

**ARTICLE 60: Lord's Supper**

The Lord's supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.

**ARTICLE 61: Admission to the Lord's Supper**

The consistory shall admit to the Lord's supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life.

Members of sister churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.

**ARTICLE 62: Attestations**

Communicant members who move to a sister church shall be given, after previous announcements to the congregation, an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, signed on behalf of the consistory by two of its members.

In the case of non-communicant members such an attestation shall be sent directly to the consistory of the church concerned.

**ARTICLE 63: Marriage**

The Word of God teaches that marriage is a union between one man and one woman.

The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers—as authorized by the consistory—solemnize only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God.

The solemnization of a marriage may take place either in a private ceremony or in a public worship service. The adopted Form for the Solemnization of Marriage shall be used.

**ARTICLE 64: Church Records**

The consistory shall maintain church records in which the names of the members and the dates of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith, marriage, and departure or death are properly recorded.

**ARTICLE 65: Funerals**

Funerals are not ecclesiastical but family affairs, and should be conducted accordingly.

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## V. Christian Discipline

### ARTICLE 66: Nature and Purpose

Since church discipline is of a spiritual nature and, as one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, has been given to the church to shut and to open that kingdom, the consistory shall ensure that it is used to punish sins against both the purity of doctrine and the piety of conduct, in order to reconcile the sinner with the church and with his neighbour, and to remove all offence out of the church of Christ—which can be done only when the rule given by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 is followed in obedience.

### ARTICLE 67: Consistory Involvement

The consistory shall not deal with any matter pertaining to purity of doctrine or piety of life that is reported to it unless it has first ascertained that both private admonitions and admonitions in the presence of one or two witnesses have remained fruitless, or that the sin committed is of a public character.

### ARTICLE 68: Excommunication

Anyone who obstinately rejects the admonition by the consistory or who has committed a public sin shall be suspended from the Lord's supper. If he continues to harden himself in sin, the consistory shall so inform the congregation by means of public announcements, in order that the congregation may be engaged in prayer and admonition, and the excommunication may not take place without its cooperation.

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned.

In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned.

In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place.

In case a non-communicant member hardens himself in sin, the consistory shall in the same manner inform the congregation by means of public announcements.

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned.

In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned and a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place.

The time between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

### ARTICLE 69: Repentance

When someone repents of a public sin or of a sin which had to be reported to the consistory, the latter shall not accept his confession of sin unless he has shown real amendment.

The consistory shall determine whether the benefit of the congregation requires that this confession of sin shall be made publicly and, in case it is made before the consistory or before two or three office-bearers, whether the congregation shall be informed afterwards.

### ARTICLE 70: Readmission

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be again received into the communion of the church, the congregation shall be informed of his desire in order to see whether there are any lawful objections.

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The time between the public announcement and the readmission of the sinner shall be not less than one month.

If no lawful objection is raised, the readmission shall take place with the use of the form for that purpose.

#### **ARTICLE 71: Suspension and Deposition of Office-Bearers**

When ministers, elders, or deacons have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuse to heed the admonitions by the consistory with the deacons, they shall be suspended from office by the judgment of their own consistory with the deacons and of the consistory with the deacons of the neighbouring church. When they harden themselves in their sin or when the sin committed is of such a nature that they cannot continue in office, elders or deacons shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories with the deacons. Classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, shall judge whether the ministers are to be deposed.

#### **ARTICLE 72: Serious and Gross Sins on the Part of Office-Bearers**

As serious and gross sins which are grounds for the suspension or deposition of office-bearers the following are to be mentioned particularly: false doctrine or heresy, public schisms, blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself, and, further, all sins and serious misdemeanours that rate as ground for excommunication with respect to other members of the church.

#### **ARTICLE 73: Christian Censure**

The ministers, elders, and deacons shall mutually exercise Christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.

#### **ARTICLE 74: No Lording It over Others**

No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers.

#### **ARTICLE 75: Property of the Churches**

All property, both real and personal, which belongs to the churches comprised respectively in classes, regional synods, and general synods in common, shall be held in trust for such churches in equal shares by deputies or trustees appointed for that purpose from time to time by the appropriate classis, regional synod, or general synod, and such deputies or trustees shall be bound by the terms of their appointment and instruction and are subject to being discharged by a subsequent classis, regional synod, or general synod.

#### **ARTICLE 76: Observance and Revision of the Church Order**

These articles, which regard the lawful order of the church, have been adopted with common accord. If the interest of the churches demand such, they may and ought to be changed, augmented, or diminished. However, no consistory, classis, or regional synod shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavour diligently to observe the articles of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by a general synod.

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## Forms of Subscription

### Form to be used in the local congregation:

We, the undersigned, ministers of God's Word, elders and deacons of the Canadian Reformed Church at \_\_\_\_\_, do, by our subscription, declare sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord that we heartily believe that the whole doctrine contained in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort fully agrees with the Word of God.

We promise, therefore, that we will diligently teach this doctrine and faithfully defend it without contradicting it publicly or privately in teaching or writing. We also declare that we reject all errors conflicting with the doctrine expressed in these confessions and promise to oppose, refute and help prevent such errors.

If at any time in the future it should happen that we would disagree with this doctrine or any part of it, we promise that we will not propose, teach, preach or publish our opinion, either publicly or privately; rather, we will first make this known to the consistory and the classis, and if necessary to the broader assemblies, for judgment. We are willing to submit to their decision; if we refuse we will by that very fact be suspended from our office.

If at any time the consistory, classis or regional synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and in order to maintain the unity and purity of the teaching, would decide to require of us a further explanation of our views, we do hereby promise that we are always willing and ready to comply under the penalty of suspension.

However, we reserve the right of appeal if we believe ourselves wronged. During the time of appeal we will acquiesce in the decision of consistory or classis or regional synod.

### Form to be used at classis meetings:

We, the undersigned, ministers of God's Word belonging to Classis \_\_\_\_\_, do, by our subscription,

declare sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord that we heartily believe that the whole doctrine contained in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort fully agrees with the Word of God.

We promise, therefore, that we will diligently teach this doctrine and faithfully defend it without contradicting it publicly or privately in teaching or writing. We also declare that we reject all errors conflicting with the doctrine expressed in these confessions and promise to oppose, refute and help prevent such errors.

If at any time in the future it should happen that we would disagree with this doctrine or any part of it, we promise that we will not propose, teach, preach or publish our opinion, either publicly or privately; rather, we will first make this known to the consistory and the classis, and if necessary to the broader assemblies, for judgment. We are willing to submit to their decision; if we refuse we will by that very fact be suspended from our office.

If at any time the classis or regional synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and in order to maintain the unity and purity of the teaching, would decide to require of us a further explanation of our views, we do hereby promise that we are always willing and ready to comply under the penalty of suspension.

However, we reserve the right of appeal if we believe ourselves wronged. During the time of appeal we will acquiesce in the decision of classis or regional synod.

