

LITURGICAL FORMS AND CONFESSIONS

SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE FOR CHURCH UNITY

REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD CARMAN 2013

October 1, 2012

Esteemed brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Herewith we humbly submit our report to Synod Carman. We regret to advise that we have nothing substantial to report in terms of progress in the mandate received.

1. Mandate

Synod Burlington gave the undersigned the following mandate (*Acts*, Art 88):

“To review and compare the Creeds, Confessions, Forms and Prayers of the CanRC and the URCNA with a view to merger, and to make itself available to the URCNA as needed.”

We also noted the words of the letter from our Synod 2010 to the URC Synod 2010 (*Acts*, p. 265): *“With respect to the work of the Songbook and the Forms and Prayers committees, we have decided to re-appoint them in the hope that they will assist our churches as we prepare for unity.”*

2. Committee activities

We perused the Minutes of the URC Synod of London 2010 to learn what its decisions might be in relation to Liturgical Forms. Art 40 of these Minutes gave our URC counterparts no mandate to cooperate with our committee. Rather, Art 135 of the URC Synod Minutes implies that their Liturgical Forms committee *not* cooperate with our committee.

To ensure that we read the Minutes correctly, we took up contact with Rev W denHollander, one of the Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity, to learn what possibilities we might have in making progress with our mandate. He advised us that there was no value in pursuing our mandate at this point in time.

Despite this advice, we sent a letter in January 2011 to Rev Daniel Hyde, the convener of the URC Liturgical Forms Committee, seeking whether there might be, in his (or his committee's) opinion, still a way forward in relation to our mandate. Rev Hyde responded that he'd placed our offer on the next agenda of his committee. We received no further response from him or his committee.

As a result, your committee has been inactive in the months that followed.

After the 2012 Synod of the URC, we received a communication from Rev W denHollander indicating that (members of) the Liturgical Forms Committee of the URC was now more open to cooperation with our committee. We took up contact with the committee, but as of

the moment of writing this report no further progress has been made. In the event there will be progress (and hence more to report) in the coming months, we will forward to Synod a supplementary report.

We have perused the (draft) Minutes of the 2012 Synod of the United Reformed Churches. Synod's decision respecting the work of their Liturgical Forms Committee records the ruling to "adopt for provisional use the forms and prayers presented by the committee" (Article 44.2). Though its mandate continues, Synod gave it no instruction to cooperate with our committee (see Article 44).

On a different matter, we received a communication from the secretary of our Church Order Committee suggesting that his committee take on itself the task of "drafting Forms for Discipline for a united federation." Our committee acquiesced to this request on grounds that drafting a Form was simply not part of our mandate.

3. Analysis

Ever since the 2010 URC Synod, we have wondered what the value of our committee was. Though we are encouraged by the fact that members of the current URC committee are presently more open to working with our committee, the fact is that their Liturgical Forms Committee has no mandate to partner with our committee in any way. As a result, we cannot see how a reappointed Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee would have any real function – except perhaps to peruse the completed work of the URC's Liturgical Forms Committee. But doing that work is, according to our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, already the mandate of the Committee responsible for Contact with the URCNA. Further, we have noted the strong cooperation of the URCNA's songbook committee with the OPC, as firmed up at Synod Nyack 2012 (Article 37 of draft Minutes). If the common songbook with us has been shelved, then common liturgical forms with us are also unlikely.

4. Recommendations

1. Not to reappoint a Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee at this time.
2. To express clearly Synod's sincere willingness to reappoint a Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee as soon as the United Reformed Churches give their committee a mandate to work with the Canadian Reformed committee in pursuit of eventual merger.

Respectfully submitted,

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