

Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad

Supplementary Report to General Synod Carman, 2013

Re: Recent Developments in the churches in Indonesia and in Korea

February 23, 2013

In this supplementary report the CRCA wants to report on some developments which took place since the publication of our report to Synod in October 2012.

Although it is important that the delegates at synod as well as the churches are aware of this information, there is no need for a substantial change to our recommendations to synod.

The Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI-NTT)

In the report of the CRCA in October 2012, the CRCA reported that the GGRI-NTT had merged with the GGRI in Kalimantan and the GGRI in Papua into a new federation, the GGRI. Until September 2012, the Canadian Reformed Churches had not received an official communication in which this fact was made known to us.

However, at the end of 2012, the CRCA received a letter from the committee on relations of the new federation of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia.

The committee apologizes for not inviting the Canadian Reformed Churches as sister churches of the GGRI-NTT to the first synod of the GGRI in February 2012 in Sentani, Papua, as well as for the fact that we were not kept informed about the development by the committee of the GGRI-NTT.

They express appreciation for the presence of Rev. Versteeg, although they realize that he was there on his own initiative and did not represent the Canadian Reformed Churches.

From the letter we received we quote:

1. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia are now spread over three provinces. The GGRI-NTT, with which the Canadian Reformed Churches have established a relationship are located in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur. Previously, the GGRI-NTT held National Conferences of the Reformed churches in Indonesia that are located in the provinces of Kalimantan Barat and Papua. We decided to form an ecclesiastical organization at the national level at the first National Synod of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia. With the help of the Lord the first National Synod took place in Sentani, Papua from February 22-25, 2012 because the GGRI-Papua were appointed to convene this at our last National Conference.
2. The forum of a National Synod has taken the place of the forum of a National Conference which until now did not have the authority to make binding ecclesiastical decisions. The purpose of forming a National Synod of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia was to enable the Reformed Churches in their respective three provinces to work together more

closely and to help each other. This confirms the unity of faith on the basis of Holy Scripture, as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and with the Reformed Church Order in Indonesia as our norm in fulfilling our calling and service in a uniform way in order to testify of the Reformed faith in Indonesia more effectively as put into practice by you, our brothers in the federations of the Reformed churches in Canada and the Netherlands.

3. We ask you to remember and pay attention to the historical background of the GGRI in these three provinces. They resulted from mission work of our sister churches in the Netherlands (RCN). Also remember that the existence and history of the GGRI-Papua cannot be separated from the work of missionaries from the Canadian Reformed Churches and from the existence of the GGRI-NTT, which have already been accepted as sister churches by Synod Burlington 2010 of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Further we ask you as Committee on Relations Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches to consider reporting on the joyful developments regarding the unification of the Reformed Churches of Indonesia in these three provinces to the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches next year, as has also been done by the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA).
4. On account of this, as Committee on Relations of the Reformed Churches of Indonesia, we would like to make use of this beautiful opportunity to propose that the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches propose to the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches that the bond of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRI-NTT may be broadened since we now form a national federation of Reformed Churches in Indonesia.
5. We are also looking further ahead to the strategic impact and prospect that this proposal may have in connection with the efforts of your CRCA to promote the unification of the Reformed Calvinist Churches (GGRC) with the GGRI, and also remembering the existence of churches which are the results of mission work of the church at Smithville in Timor and the College of the Reformed Christian Religion (Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Reformed Indonesia / STAKRI) in Kupang.

From the attached documents, which are a brief summary of the Acts of the first National Synod of the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI) and the Regulations of the first National Synod, the CRCA does get a positive impression of this new federation. However, there are still several questions that remain.

In the first place: we do not know the other two federations (in Papua and in Kalimantan Barat) at all. What is their size, how do they put into practice what they confess in the Three Forms of Unity and what they agreed upon in the Church Order, how can a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches be of mutual benefit?

In the second place: why was the GGRC not involved in this process of unification? They are sister churches of the GGRI-NTT and indicated that they would have liked to be involved in this process. Why did this not happen? Why were the church of Smithville and the mission churches in Timor not informed about what was happening?

In the third place: How important is for the GGRI a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches? The Canadian Reformed Churches were not informed of the synod taking place in February 2012 and it took almost nine months before we received an official communication from the GGRI. Other sister churches were invited and were present.

The CRCA has not had the opportunity to investigate in order to get answers to these questions and therefore the CRCA maintains its first recommendation (see page 31 of the report) regarding the GGRI-NTT. The CRCA has the hope that the Canadian Reformed Churches will be able to receive this new federation as sister churches, but realizes that we must tread carefully and follow proper procedure.

Since we did receive a request from the new federation GGRI for a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship, the second part of the first recommendation needs to be rephrased.

Here follows our amended recommendation 1:

“to suspend the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRI(NTT), to take up contact with the Committee on Relations of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia to gain more information about this new federation and to come with a recommendation to the general synod of 2016 regarding a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRI.”

The Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC)

In its report of October 2012, the CRCA reported that the synod of the GGRC in July 2011 was adjourned and was supposed to convene again in November 2011, but that this did not happen. Now we can report that in November 2012, this synod reconvened to finish its business. The CRCA sent a letter to the synod in which the GGRC was again encouraged to abide by the adopted Church Order, as well as to seek unity with the GGRI-NTT and cooperation with the Theological School in Kupang, which was established by the church in Smithville. We received a response from the synod in which they indicated their commitment to the Reformed Church Order, as well as to the process of seeking ecclesiastical unity with the GGRC-NTT and cooperation with the Theological School in Kupang. They did express their uncertainty about the GGRI since they were not properly informed about the new situation after the unification of the three GGRI federations.

The CRCA noticed that classis meetings do take place in the GGRC although not yet on a regular basis. We are thankful that the church of Edmonton (Immanuel) decided to continue to support the GGRC through seminars and financial support for the assemblies, so that an impediment for the assemblies to meet regularly is being taken away.

Rev. Yonson Dethan has moved to Malang, in Java, to teach at a Theological School there. He remains involved in the GGRC, but the contacts of the CRCA with the GGRC now mainly take place through Rev. Yawan Bunda and br. Soleman Dethan, who are resp. the vice chairman and secretary of the Deputy for Relations with Churches Abroad.

The CRCA is thankful for the progress in the GGRC, even though it is slow, but at this moment it doesn't have sufficient confidence to come with a different recommendation to synod.

Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea

The PCK sent an executive summary of their General Assembly held on September 19-22, 2012. Our churches were represented by Rev. J.M. Batteau as arranged with our sister churches in the Netherlands.

We had expressed the need for more information about the Korean Conference of Churches. The PCK has suspended their membership for one year because of concern with the current board members.

The PCK is also in continuing unity discussions with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapshin).

We were informed that the correct English name for their churches is: Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK)

Respectfully submitted by your committee,

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