

## **Press Release CERCU/CCU November 2013**

The annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) once again provided a venue for representatives of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) and the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) to meet and discuss their efforts toward merger. Those present from the URCNA's Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) were Rev. Bill Boekestein, Rev. John Bouwers, Rev. Dan Donovan, Rev. Casey Freswick, Rev. Dr. Michael Horton, Rev. Rick Miller, Rev. Bill Pols, Rev. Ralph Pontier, and Rev. William Van Hal, while Rev. William den Hollander and Rev. Clarence VanderVelde were present as the CanRC's Coordinators of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU).

Meetings were held on the evening of Monday, Nov 18 and the afternoon of Wednesday, Nov 20, 2013 in Flat Rock, North Carolina. The focus of the meetings was how we can best move forward in our relationship leading to merger. Rev. William den Hollander reported on his visits to URCNA classes and churches in the United States since our meeting a year ago. So far he has visited all the American classes, except Classis Pacific Northwest which he hopes to visit in the spring of 2014. Rev. den Hollander has also used those occasions and other occasions to preach in American churches and attend ministerials of the URCNA. These visits served as excellent opportunities for brotherly interaction about the issues involved in the efforts toward merger. These invitations were issued in light of Synod Nyack 2012's mandate to the churches "to continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger."

In an effort to understand one another better, we discussed covenant views in the CanRC and the URCNA. The discussion then moved on to why the CanRC dislike extra-confessional statements. We also discussed the status of the doctrinal statements adopted by recent URCNA synods.

We discussed CERCU's intention to move the relationship to Phase 3A, which would mean a commitment to making concrete preparations for an eventual merger. It is CERCU's intention to present Synod Visalia 2014 with a preliminary outline of such a plan leading up to a finalized proposal to Synod 2016. Part of this plan would be to encourage URCNA churches to interact with those issues that need resolution before merger. Furthermore, to enhance understanding of the issues involved, the hope is that a colloquium can be held at Synod Visalia 2014 in which two representatives from the URCNA and two from the CanRC will address covenant views and perhaps other theological issues.

As we work toward merger, may the Lord bless our humble efforts in such a way that they serve as a witness to the world and for the glory of his Name.