

**Report to
General Synod Dunnville 2016**

**Committee for
Contact with Churches in North America**

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**The Committee for Contact with Churches in North America
Report to Synod Dunnville 2016**

September 11, 2015

Beloved brothers in the Lord,

With brotherly greetings in the name of Christ, we submit our report to General Synod Dunnville, as mandated by General Synod Carman West 2013. We do so with thanks to God for His blessing upon the numerous brotherly meetings, discussions, and communications that have occurred during the past three years. We trust that the churches will continue to pray for an increase in the unity of the faith among the churches with whom we enjoy ecclesiastical fellowship or other close relations.

1. Introduction

1.1 Committee members

General Synod Carman-West 2013 made the following appointments to the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America: (*Acts 2013*, p. 238):

E. Kampen (convenor) (2016), P. H. Holtvlüwer (2016), C. Poppe (2019), D.W. Vandeburgt (2019), J. Poppe (2019), D. Vandeburgt (2019), H. Van Delden (2019), G. Bos (2022), L. Vanderveen (2022)

As brs. Holtvlüwer and Kampen will complete their terms in 2016, the committee asks Synod to make two appointments. For the sake of continuity and efficiency, the CCCNA will submit to Synod a separate letter suggesting the names of suitable individuals who have been found willing and able to serve in this capacity.

Recommendations:

1. Rev. E. Kampen and Rev. P. Holtvlüwer be discharged from the CCCNA, and thanked for their years of service to the churches as members of the committee;
2. Suitable replacements be appointed to the CCCNA, with consideration given to the geographic distribution of committee members in East (Ontario) and West (Manitoba), and to the candidates suggested by the CCCNA.

1.2 General activity and committee structure

Plenary meetings of the CCCNA were held on Monday, November 10, 2014, and Friday September 11, 2015 with the following brothers appointed as the executive:

- a. Chairman: Rev. E. Kampen
- b. General Secretary: Rev. D. Vandeburgt
- c. Treasurer: Br. H. Van Delden

Two subcommittees were maintained according to the location of committee members in Ontario and Manitoba; the following division of labour was agreed upon:

Subcommittee East: Contacts with ERQ and OPC,
Subcommittee West: Contacts with RCUS, RPCNA, and NAPARC

At least two members of each subcommittee were responsible for attending NAPARC in 2013, 2014, and 2015. Minutes of the subcommittee meetings were exchanged via email to promote good communication and mutual scrutiny.

2. General Mandate

General Synod Carman-West 2013 (*Acts 2013*, p.46) continued the mandate that General Synod Burlington-Ebenezer 2010 gave the CCCNA: (*Acts 2010*, p. 69):

1. To continue contact with all those churches in the Americas with which we have EF according to the adopted rules, and in accordance with the mandates described in decisions taken by synod with respect to the churches with which we have ongoing relationships.
2. To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in the Americas.
3. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in the Americas.
4. To report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next General Synod, and to present to the churches a report of its work six months prior to the convening of the next General Synod.

For the sake of convenience, here follow the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) that the committee applies in fulfilling its mandate. These rules were determined by Synod Lincoln 1992 (*Acts*, p. 33):

1. The churches shall assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy, and be watchful for deviations.
 2. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts or Minutes and otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible, in translation).
 3. The churches shall consult each other when entering into relations with third parties.
 4. The churches shall accept one another's attestations or certificates of good standing, which also means admitting members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation or certificate.
 5. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches.
- In exercising these relations, the churches shall strive to implement also the following:

6. When major changes or additions are being considered to the confessions, church government or liturgy, the churches shall be informed in order that as much consultation can take place as possible before a final decision is taken.

7. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to participate as much as local regulations permit.

Recommendation:

That the mandate, as stated by Synod 2010, be continued for the CCCNA until 2019.

3. Subcommittee East

3.1 General activity

Meetings of subcommittee East were held on July 3, 2013; December 2, 2013; October 7, 2014; December 12, 2014; June 8, 2015. Rev. E. Kampen served as convener; Rev. D. Vandeburgt served as recording and corresponding secretary.

The subcommittee met with representatives of the ERQ's Committee for Interchurch relations on November 20, 2013, November 12, 2014 and November 10-12, 2015. A delegate or delegates from the committee attended Synods of the ERQ on November 2, 2013, May 10, 2014 and May 9, 2015.

One of the CCCNA members attended and spoke a few words of congratulation at the anniversary retreat to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Inauguration of the ERQ, held at Asbestos, Québec on October 11-13, 2013 (See Bos G, Bos A. ERQ Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Retreat. Clarion 2014; 63:42).

Members of the subcommittee met with the OPC Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relationships on November 20, 2013, November 11, 2014, and November 10-12, 2015. Two members also attended the 80th General Assembly of the OPC from June 5-7, 2014.

The subcommittee members also kept in contact with one another and with their counterparts in the ERQ and OPC via telephone and email.

3.2 Reports and recommendations

Reports and recommendations are attached for the following:

Report 1 - L'Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ)

Report 2 - The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

4. Subcommittee West

4.1 General Activity

Meetings of Subcommittee West were held on June 18, 2013; January 22, 2014; June 7, 2014; February 11, 2015; and June 11, 2015. At these meetings, Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer served as chairman; br. H. VanDelden as corresponding secretary, Rev. J. Poppe as recording secretary and br. L. Vanderveen as vice-all.

Delegates of the subcommittee met with the RCUS Inter-Church Committee on November 19, 2013, November 11, 2014 and November... 2015. Delegates were sent to the 268th Synod of the RCUS, May 19-23, 2014 and the 269th Synod of the RCUS, May 18-21, 2015.

Delegates of the subcommittee met with the RPCNA IRC on Nov 12, 2014.

The subcommittee members also kept in contact with one another and with their counterparts in the RCUS and RPCNA via telephone, Skype, and email.

4.2 Reports and Recommendations

Reports and recommendations are attached for the following:

Report 3 - The Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

Report 4 - Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

5. Concerns of the Committee as a Whole

As deputies of synod, acting on behalf of the federation of churches, the CCCNA strives to serve the churches in fulfilling the mandate given to it by the General Synod. As mentioned in the reports of contacts made to our sister churches, a sensitive issue has arisen because the mandate given to this committee by General Synod 2013 requires it to discuss again particular issues from the past with each church. The mandate to discuss a particular issue or a specific matter with another church body is not the issue. *“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”* (Proverbs 27:17) We are the servants of the churches and discuss these differences with our brothers in the faith in the context of Romans 14.

However, we do struggle with the lack of consistency by the decision of General Synod 2013 mandating that once again special attention be given to outstanding issues compared with the decisions of General Synods of 2007 and General Synod 2010 wherein these outstanding matters were to be discussed when appropriate. We fear that this threatens our progress in the EF relationships we have or desire to build.

We have paraphrased Considerations 3.5, 3.6, and Recommendation 4.3 of Art. 131 of General Synod Smithers 2007:

- The establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship means that unity of faith is recognized. As churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, there are numerous issues that need each other's attention. In an existing relation of ecclesiastical fellowship topics-of-the-day need attention as much as the outstanding matters. As the CCCNA carries out its work according to the adopted Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, it should pursue the outstanding matters where appropriate.
- To continue the Relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the under the adopted rules. As the CCCNA fulfils its mandate according to these rules, the outstanding matters are to be raised when appropriate.

As Article 33, GS 2007 states, *“The focus (on a general discussion) will be on the differences between these churches and the CanRC, what our purpose should be in having these ongoing*

discussions, and how such a mandate could be concluded. The meeting welcomed such a discussion.”

The CCCNA requests Synod to be sensitive to the fact that mandating it to discuss particular matters from the past is distinctly unhelpful in developing close relations with our sister churches. Our sister churches do not understand why we are mandated to discuss issues from the past when nothing has happened in the relationship to give reason for such a discussion. If Synod desires to renew this mandate, then as your servants we ask, what is the purpose and goal of having such discussions and how can they come to a brotherly conclusion?

6. NAPARC

The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) is an organization of confessional Reformed and Presbyterian churches. As such both subcommittees of the CCCNA have delegated two members to attend annual meetings of NAPARC, and decisions pertaining to our participation in it are normally determined at plenary meetings. Attendance at NAPARC took place November 19&20, 2013 (Bonclarken Conference Centre in Flat Rock, NC); November 11-12, 2014 (Grassie Canadian Reformed Church in Grassie, ON) and November 10-12, 2015 (Quebec City, QC)

For the purposes of efficient communication, planning, and operation, subcommittee West has been assigned responsibility for NAPARC.

A report and recommendations are attached for:

Report 5 - The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)

7. Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin)

As per the third point of our mandate (*To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in the Americas*), Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer responded to a request to attend the 30th General Assembly of Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin). In addition the delegates attending NAPARC 2015 responded to a request to meet with two delegates of the KPCA on November 12, 2015.

For the purposes of efficient communication, planning, and operation, subcommittee East has been assigned responsibility for the KPCA.

A report is attached for:

Report 6 - The Korean Presbyterian Church in America (KPCA)

8. Expenses

From the time of Synod Carman 2013, until September 11, 2015, \$16378.72 has been spent in fulfilling the mandate.

Respectfully submitted by your committee,

Subcommittee East:

E. Kampen (Orangeville, ON)
C. Poppe (Guelph, ON)
D. Vandeburgt (Langley, BC)
G. Bos (Guelph, ON)

Subcommittee West:

P.H. Holtvlüwer (Tintern, ON)
J. Poppe (Winnipeg, MB)
H. Van Delden (Winnipeg, MB)
L. VanderVeen (Carman, MB)

Appended Reports

1. L'Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ)
2. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
3. The Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)
4. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)
5. The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)
6. The Korean Presbyterian Church in America - Kosin (KPCA)
7. Appendices re: RPCNA, NAPARC and KPCA

Report 1. L'Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ)

Introduction

The ERQ currently consists of five churches: l'Église chrétienne réformée de Beauce in St-Georges de Beauce, with as pastors Rev. Paulin Bédard and Rev. Mario Veilleux; l'Église réformée St-Marc in Sainte-Foy (Québec City), with pastor Rev. Bernard Westerveld; l'Église réformée de la Rive-Sud in Charny, vacant; l'Église réformée St-Jean in Montréal, vacant; and l'Église réformée St-Paul in Repentigny with pastor Rev. Winston Bosch.

The membership of the ERQ churches stands at about 350. The diversity of church members is considerable. Most of the members are converts from Roman Catholicism whereas other members have a Baptist or Evangelical background. Such diversity causes significant challenges to the Reformed Churches in Québec. The churches in Québec faithfully proclaim the Word of God to those who attend the worship services, bring the Good News in the communities in which they live, and serve French-speaking people locally and world-wide by translating and composing articles about the Bible, the Confessions and distributing other Christian literature.

Recently, the ERQ churches finished the compilation and publication of the “Documents Officiels de L'Église Réformée du Québec (Official Documents of the ERQ). They consist of one document entitled “Notre foi” (Our Faith) consisting of a preamble to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism; the second document is about “Notre organisation” (Our Organisation) and consists of the Church Order and Rules for Synod; and the third document called “Nos liturgies” (Our Liturgical Forms) consists of the forms for Confession of Faith, the Baptism of Infants, and for the Baptism and Profession of Faith Adults.

The ERQ churches are thankful for God's continued care in building up the churches in Québec and they rejoice in the growth of a second and third generation of Québécois believers in their midst. The resources of the ERQ churches with respect to people and finances are limited. They covet the prayers of fellow-believers and thankfully receive their encouragement and financial support. Information about the ERQ can be obtained by visiting the website www.erq.qc.ca. More can be learned about the individual churches by visiting their websites: beauce.erq.qc.ca, stpaul.erq.qc.ca, erq.qc.ca/stjean, erq.qc.ca/stmarc and rivesud.erq.qc.ca.

An excellent historical review of the relations between the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) and the ERQ, covering the period from 1994 to 2007, is found on pp. 115-134 in *Reports to General Synod Smithers 2007*, Vol. 1. The same Synod (Smithers, 2007), following discussions with the ERQ and upon advice of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas (CCCA), decided to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the ERQ (Article 75 of the Acts, pp. 42-48).

1. Mandate

Synod Carman 2013 gave the CCCNA the following mandate with respect to the ERQ (Acts 2013, p. 27):

- a) To mandate the CCCNA to continue the relationship of EF with the ERQ under the adopted rules, giving particular attention to the matters of supervision of the pulpit, admissions to the Lord's table and women deacons (in particular, the ordination of) and to provide an account of its dialogue with the ERQ.

2. Correspondence

As per rule 2 of EF, the CICR received the *Acts of General Synod Carman-West 2013*. The CCCNA sent a letter of fraternal greeting to a Synod held February 8, 2014. The CCCNA received from the ERQ minutes of their Synods held since Synod Carman 2013 up until the date of this report.

3. Meetings with the Committee for Inter-Church Relations (CICR)

3.1 November 14, 2012

Present for this meeting were Rev. J. Zuidema and Rev. B. Westerveld for the ERQ and Rev. P. Holtvluwer, J. Kuik, C. Poppe and Rev. D. Vandeburgt for the CCCNA. The following matters were discussed:

3.1.1 Women Deacons

The ERQ brothers were asked about the occurrence of women deacons in the ERQ, if they are ordained and if they exercise authority in the churches. Rev. Zuidema answered that there are indeed women deacons in the ERQ who are ordained. He further noted that this practice to ordain women as deacons is the same as that operating in the RPCNA, that the women deacons are under the supervision of the elders, and that they neither exercise an authoritative role nor are part of the local council. He defended the practice with the same reasoning as found in the article "On Women Deacons" authored by Christian Adjemian (attached as Appendix 3 by the CCCNA to its report to Synod Carman-West 2013).

One of the CCCNA delegates asked if the statement by the RPCNA that the CanRC "already holds ecumenical fellowship with another exclusive Psalm singing denomination (Free Church of Scotland) as well as with *the Église Réformée du Québec which hold to the office of women deacons* (italicized by the CCCNA) (see Appendix 1 of the report of the CCCNA to Synod Carman-West 2013) is correct. Rev. Westerveld confirmed the same and reiterated the phrase from the Church Order of the ERQ that "The parish can call to the office of deacon all members who show evidence of their competence according to the Biblical criteria mentioned in Acts 6:3; Rom 16:1,2; 1 Tim. 3:8-13" (See art. 2.4.3 of the "Ecclesiastical Order and Discipline of the ERQ). Upon inquiry he noted that l'Église réformée St-Marc at Sainte-Foy and l'Église chrétienne réformée de Beauce at St-Georges de Beauce had decided not to ordain women deacons. He further noted that no women deacons have been ordained in l'Église réformée St-Jean in Montréal and l'Église réformée de la Rive-Sud at Charny, since both these churches are served by PCA ministers who are not permitted to ordain women deacons. In summary, only one of the five churches of l'Église réformée du Québec, namely l'Église réformée St-Paul at Repentigny, has ordained women deacons who function as described in the previous paragraph.

3.2 November 20, 2013

Present for this meeting were Rev. B. Westerveld and Rev. W. Bosch for the ERQ and Rev. P. Holtvliwer, Rev. E. Kampen, Rev. D. Vandeburgt, and H. van Delden for the CCCNA. The following matters were discussed:

3.2.1 Women Deacons

The ERQ delegates reminded those of the CCCNA that the ordination of women had been possible according to the “Ordre et Discipline Ecclesiastiques de l’ÉRQ (ODE)”, the Church Order of the ERQ, from the very beginning of her existence and that this fact has never been hidden. They observed that the ERQ came into existence in part in response to the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Presbyterian Church in Canada opening all the offices to women. They noted that the presence of women in the office of deacons should therefore not be seen as a first step towards women in all the offices and said that this is not even a question in the ERQ (See Note below). They further explained that this is an unresolved issue in the ERQ. Some churches have specifically stated that they will not ordain women in the office of deacon, while another has explicitly stated that it will, and considers the churches that do not to contravene the order of the church. It was reiterated that in the one of five ERQ churches that has ordained women deacons, the deacons do not participate in the ruling of the church. That is done by the ruling council, which is responsible for teaching and discipline. The council will meet with the deacons to deal with diaconal matters.

Note: For a further understanding of this statement from a historical point of view, the reader might wish to consult: Zuidema J. *The Life and Thought of David Craig – 1937-2001. Texts and Studies in Protestant History and Thought in Québec*: Volume 2. Chapter 9. United and Divided. Working Together? Clements Publishing, Toronto, ON, Canada. 2008, pp. 99-123. One of the reasons that the Rev. David Craig, a former missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, was excluded from the Presbyterian Church in Canada and joined with the ERQ at its inauguration on 6 November 1988, was the decision of the Presbyterian Church in Canada that any minister in the Presbyterian Church in Canada could enjoy an internal liberty of conscience, but not an external liberty of action. A minister could disagree with the ordination of women to the office of pastor and elder in his conscience, but he had to participate in the ordination of a woman pastor or elder if called upon to do so. The Rev. David Craig and the members of the St-Marc church strenuously disagreed with this “liberty of conscience, but not of action” barrier laid on new pastors and argued that this “barrier act” was unbiblical and unpresbyterian.

3.2.2 Supervision of the Pulpit

The ERQ brothers explained that to limit admission to the pulpit to ministers from churches in EF would in effect mean no ministers would be available because they cannot speak the French language. On occasion the ERQ churches have had ministers preach who were associated with another NAPARC church, but not a church in EF with the ERQ. The brothers asked for understanding of the unique circumstances of the ERQ. Supervision of the pulpit is taken very seriously by the local councils and the synod to ensure faithful Reformed preaching takes place.

3.2.3 Modus Operandi of the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches

In light of having observed the proceedings at the last General Synod (Carman West, 2013) the brothers from the ERQ asked questions about the way the CanRC synod functions. Specifically,

they noted the absence of committee members to respond to specific questions thereby relying exclusively on written reports; they asked whether all questions from local councils are considered equally and wondered what weight is given to local councils that are silent or in agreement with the reports submitted to Synod. They surmised that a degree of fatigue would occur when having to respond to the same questions each Synod.

The CCCNA members responded that the absence of committee members at Synod and reliance on written reports is a reflection of experiences in history, going back to the Netherlands, where committee members and faculty from the seminary exercised considerable influence on the decisions of Synod. The CCCNA acknowledged that the reluctance to consult committees had the effect of committees being mandated to deal with matters addressed in reports to previous Synods, which could have been prevented if a committee had been consulted by advisory committees of Synod.

With respect to the question about the weight given to councils that are silent or in agreement, it was noted that in principle, Synods try to weigh the value of what is said rather than the number of submissions, while keeping in mind decisions of previous Synods. In practice however, Synod seems to vacillate, with the one Synod in effect undoing decisions of the previous Synod even when only a few churches challenge the decisions of the previous Synod. At times, Synods refer to previous Synods very selectively. As a result, even if only one church raises a complaint or raises a point that has been repeatedly addressed, Synods often reintroduce it in a committee mandate.

3.2.4 Development of a 'sister to sister' relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches

The ERQ brothers asked how to develop a 'sister to sister' church relationship with the CanRC and not a mother to daughter church relationship. This question was asked in light of the experiences at Synod where the fraternal delegate felt unsure whether he should speak about issues before plenary sessions of Synod. A matter arising from the discussion was that the chairman of Synod would at times ask the fraternal delegate specifically if he had some insight on various matters being discussed. The fraternal delegate felt that this should not be limited just to matters pertaining to their particular church but to any matter being discussed. It was noted that the "Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship" (see Art. 50 of the Acts of Synod Lincoln 1992) address this issue in that it states in rule 7 "The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to participate as much as local regulations permit".

3.2.5 The 'particular attention' mandate of the CCCNA received from Synod 2013 re: ERQ

The ERQ brothers explained that "*the matters of supervision of the pulpit, admission to the Lord's Table and women deacons (in particular, the ordination thereof...)*" are unresolved issues within the ERQ. As these are divisive within the ERQ, care must be taken not to push the issues in this small and fragile group of churches. By including them in the mandate, the CanRC will come across as trying to set the agenda for the ERQ. These matters will come to the table of the ERQ synods when they are placed on the agenda by local churches. When local ERQ churches raise the issues, advice and input from the churches in EF will be welcomed and solicited.

3.2.6 Are different interpretations of Genesis 1&2 permitted in the Canadian Reformed Churches?

This question was posed by ERQ delegates to the CCCNA representatives and also to delegates of other churches with whom the ERQ has EF. There are ongoing extensive discussions at ERQ Synods about what the Bible teaches in Genesis 1 and 2 and the binding thereto by the Reformed Confessions. The CCCNA brothers said that one can expect to hear the teaching of six day creation from CanRC pulpits. No broader assembly has made doctrinal pronouncements regarding this matter. The CanRC avoid making doctrinal pronouncements beyond the confessions. Broader assemblies will only make decisions on individual cases whether teachings are within the bounds of the Reformed Confessions. No one has ever addressed a broader assembly with an accusation that the teaching of a minister pertaining to Genesis 1 and 2 is against the confessed understanding of Scripture.

3.3 November 12, 2014

Present for this meeting for the ERQ were Rev. B. Westerveld and V. Collet and for the CanRC G. Bos, Rev. P. Holtvlüwer, Rev. E. Kampen, C. Poppe, H. VanDelden and L. Vanderveen. The following matters were discussed:

3.3.2 Update on Genesis 1&2 and Creation in the ERQ

A proposal by the St-Marc ERQ to outline and affirm the teachings of the Scriptures and the Confessions regarding creation and the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 had been referred to the Ministerial Committee of the ERQ churches for review.

3.3.3 Marriage vows

At the ERQ synod held on May 10, 2014 the Church at St-Marc presented a modification to the “Marriage Vows adopted by the St-Marc church”. The vows are similar to those found in the Book of Praise of the CanRC published in 2013 (see page 630). The vows contain additional clauses such as (for the bridegroom) “I promise to love and honour you *as Jesus Christ has loved the Church and gave his life for her*”, and for the bride “I promise to love and respect you *as the Church loves and submits to Jesus Christ*”. The CCCNA delegates asked if the vows would be incorporated into a Form for the Solemnization of Marriage and noted that the CanRC have a very biblical form for that purpose.

4. Attendance at Synods of the ERQ

4.1. Synod of November 2, 2013

Br. C. Poppe attended this Synod convened at l’Église St-Marc at Québec City. We highlight the following from his report:

4.1.1 Songs for Children

L’Église réformée de la Rive-Sud has established a committee of musicians (members of the church), who under the supervision and guidance of the church, plan to compose Christian songs suitable for children that would help them to memorise the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The program is called “gamal musique ministère”. The proposal was discussed at some length to

assure adherence of the texts to the Scriptures, supervision by the church at Rive-Sud, and to ensure that it would be beneficial to all churches. All churches supported the program.

4.1.2 Creation

There were two presentations on the topic of creation, one on “The days of creation: a second look at Scriptures” by Rev. Zoellner, and the other on “Literary framework or six 24-hour days” by Rev. Bédard. These presentations were meant to provide a context for further discussions at subsequent synods.

4.2 Synod of May 10, 2014

Brs. G. Bos and C. Poppe attended this Synod convened at l’Église réformée de la Rive-Sud. We highlight the following from their report:

4.2.1 The Administration of the Lord’s Supper

The St-Marc ERQ presented a submission called “Réflexions sur l’administration de la sainte Cène dans l’Église Réformée St-Marc de Québec” (“Reflections on the administration of the Holy Supper in the ERQ of St-Marc, Québec”), asking for comments from the other ERQ churches in the hope to promote unity among the ERQ churches.

The submission reads, in part, that “Our reflections about the Lord’s Supper concern mainly two subjects: namely, its administration to visitors and its frequency”. Concerning the administration of the Lord’s Supper to visitors, St-Marc writes that it has “already been an issue of lively discussion among the ministers and elders of the ERQ but that thus far, regrettably, no common practice has been adopted”. It writes that “We wish to underline the common convictions that we have regarding the administration of the Lord’s Supper. We recognize that each person is responsible to examine oneself before communion”. “The members of our churches are admitted to the table of the Lord by the elders since they professed publicly their faith in Jesus Christ (See the form for the confession of faith). Our children by marriage are not received at the table of the Lord before having professed their faith before the congregation. The sensitive question is clearly the reception of visitors, be they occasional visitors or regularly attending our assemblies”. “Recognizing the dynamics between personal responsibility of each person who comes to the Lord’s table and the requirement of the elders to protect its sanctity, we require him who officiates to read an invitation and a warning before the distribution of the elements, that essentially reads as follows: “The Lord has prepared this Table for all those who take hold with joy of its promises and who respond with humility at its call. If you have received the promises of God with a believing and repentant heart, and if you have already confessed that faith in a Church that faithfully teaches the doctrine of grace, the Lord Jesus invites you to participate in this supper with joy. However, if you do not quite understand the significance of this supper, or if you have not been baptized, or if you have never professed your faith in a Church, or if there is a sin in your life for which you are not yet ready to ask for forgiveness, you must not participate, so as to prevent, as the Lord says, to eat and drink to your judgment. You are invited to observe the administration of the Lord’s Supper to learn what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for his people and to pray that God would accord you such faith and such repentance that you could profess it before God and his Church”.

St-Marc further writes that “We believe that the announcement about the invitation and the warning is a legitimate exercise of pastoral authority”. However, “making such an announcement a few minutes before the distribution of the bread and the wine by the elders gives the visitors little time to reflect on its significance and to conduct a proper self-examination. Moreover, the visitors may not always be aware of the importance of belonging to a local Church, where there are spiritual rulers, who watch over them, before partaking in the Lord’s Supper (Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-3). We therefore envision giving the visitors who come in Church a pamphlet explaining the meaning of the Supper including the invitation and the warning. We also require them to write down the name of the local church of which they are members. We will inform that Church that their members have been received at the table of the Lord in our Church”.

With regards to the frequency of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the Church at St-Marc noted that “All the ERQ churches have the custom to celebrate the supper of the Lord once each month, normally the first Sunday of the month. As far as we know this practice has never been adopted by a synod. Moreover, we recognize that the Lord Jesus has not ordained a frequency for the celebration of his supper. He simply said “Do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me”. On the other hand, the practice of the first believers and the first Churches seems to have been at least weekly (Acts 2:42, 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:33). “Our council is considering celebrating the Lord’s Supper every Sunday when a pastor is present for its distribution together with the elders”. The proposal of the St-Marc Church is under consideration by the other ERQ churches.

4.2.2 Creation

The issue of the response to ERCB (Beauce) letter regarding creation in 6 days of 24 hours (6/24) was discussed, with written submissions from ERSM (St. Marc), ERSJ (St. Jean) – in collaboration with ERQC (Charny) and ERSP (St. Paul). Different aspects of this issue had been discussed at the previous 2 synods, with a view of deciding the approach at this synod. It was decided for the president of the Synod to write a pastoral letter to ERCB allowing a divergence of interpretations (using language from the submissions) with limits to the divergences to be proposed by the Ministerial Committee to the November 2014 Synod.

4.3 May 9, 2015

Br. G. Bos attended this Synod convened at Institute Farel in Montréal. From his report we highlight the following:

4.3.1 Creation

A report of the Ministerial Committee dated March 24, 2015 was presented to synod, fulfilling the mandate to provide some safeguards with respect to teaching on creation and evolution. A response to this report from ERCB (Beauce) interacting with the safeguards and proposing to invalidate the decision of May 10, 2014, rejecting the ‘long age’ interpretation of Genesis 1, and rejecting the safeguards proposed by the ministerial committee as inadequate was dated May 4th, 2015. Due to the fact that most churches had not had the opportunity to formally deal with the ERCB (Beauce) proposal, the entire discussion was postponed until the next synod.

4.3.2 Other Developments

The Ministerial Committee, as requested, presented a proposal about procedures to prepare and examine candidates for the pastoral ministry and the reception of pastors from sister churches. It too is under consideration by the churches.

5. Considerations

1. The churches in Québec faithfully proclaim the Word of God to those who attend the worship services, bring the Good News in the communities in which they live, and serve French-speaking people locally and world-wide by translating and composing articles about the Bible, the Confessions and by distributing other Christian literature.
2. It needs to be highlighted that the limited involvement of delegates at Synods and the content of the mandate makes the CanRC appear as a domineering mother rather than a loving sister. The desire of the ERQ brothers to have a sister to sister church relationship with the CanRC and not a mother to daughter church relationship could perhaps be met by involving delegates, pastors and elders of the ERQ not only with respect to matters regarding the ERQ, but also when dealing with matters where the ERQ has a great depth of experience, such as mission and how to serve God in a society that is indifferent or opposes Christ and his Church.
3. Synod Carman-West (2013) mandated the CCCNA to pay “particular attention to the matters of supervision of the pulpit, admission to the Lord’s Table, and women deacons (in particular, the ordination of)”. We hope you can glean from this report that the ERQ churches are wrestling with these issues. We have repeatedly witnessed the desire of the ERQ churches to follow the Scriptures in preaching, teaching, the functioning of the offices and the use of the sacraments.

We would like to highlight the following in particular on the matter of admission to the Lord’s Table. As we reported to the previous Synod (Carman West) 2013, there is more or less a *status quo* regarding the principles and practice of admission to the Lord’s Supper among the ERQ churches. This topic has been raised at every CanRC Synod since Synod Abbotsford (1995), the first Synod that discussed submissions related to the ERQ. The response of the ERQ can perhaps best be summarized by quoting the CCCA report to Synod Smithers (2007) that reads, in part, that “The ERQ agrees that we must not profane the table of our Lord, and consequently, the elders of the local church must supervise its administration”. The report further notes that “The present practice of the ERQ congregations involves celebrating monthly communion during which the pastor addresses a clear verbal invitation and warning to all those who are present. Baptised members of the congregation are not received at the Lord’s Table until they have professed their faith. Excommunicated members are not received until they have been restored through public confession. With respect to visitors, the same verbal invitation and warning are addressed without requiring a written attestation. In some of our congregations, a follow-up is made with respect to those visitors who attend more regularly the worship service concerning their participation at the Lord’s Table” (see Reports to General Synod Smithers 2007. Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas (CCCA), page 124).

4. The membership of the ERQ churches is small (about 350) and the diversity of church members is considerable. Most of the members are converts from Roman Catholicism whereas other members have a Baptist or Evangelical background. Such diversity causes significant challenges to the Reformed Churches in Québec. The resources of the ERQ churches with respect to people and finances are limited. They covet the prayers of fellow-believers and thankfully receive their encouragement and financial support.

6. Recommendations

The CCCNA recommends that Synod decide:

1. To thank the Lord for the faithful Reformed witness provided in and by the ERQ.
2. To mandate the CCCNA to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the ERQ under the adopted rules.
3. To involve fraternal delegates in discussions at Synod in such a way as to honour the sister to sister church relationship.
4. To no longer mandate the CCCNA to specifically deal with items that have been thoroughly discussed and reported on since the establishment of contact with the ERQ in 1995.
5. To recognize both the autonomy of the ERQ as a sister church and its small and fragile condition as a young Reformed church in a spiritually hostile environment.
6. To encourage the churches to support the ERQ churches prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects.

Report 2. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

Introduction

As of the end of 2014 there are 273 local churches and 50 mission works in the OPC. Total membership is 31,122. Its General Assembly meets annually, the most recent being from June 6 to 12, 2015. The next Assembly will be held, the Lord willing, beginning June 8-14, 2016.

Further Information about the OPC may be obtained by visiting its website: www.opc.org.

Synod Coaldale 1977 of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) recognized the OPC a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ (see *Acts General Synod Coaldale 1977, Article 91*). Synod Neerlandia 2001 of the CanRC established Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the OPC (see *Acts General Synod Neerlandia 2001, Article 45*).

1. Mandate

Synod Carman 2013 gave the following mandate to the CCCNA concerning the OPC (*Article 43*):

4.3. To mandate the CCCNA to continue the relationship of EF with the OPC under the adopted rules giving particular attention, together with the CEIR, to the functioning of the 2001 agreement.

The CCCNA, on behalf of the CanRC, continued the relationship of EF by adhering to the rules for EF adopted by Synod Lincoln 1992 (Article 50). The dialogue between the CanRC and OPC took place by correspondence, annual meetings with the Committee for Ecumenicity and Inter-Church Relations (CEIR), and bi-annual attendance of the General Assembly. The reports on these activities are found below. We also had the privilege of receiving fraternal delegates from the OPC at General Synod Carman 2013, where Rev. Peter Wallace gave a fraternal address (see *Acts General Synod Carman 2013, Article 75 and Appendix 8*).

2. Correspondence

As per rule 2 of EF the CEIR received the *Acts of General Synod Carman 2013*. Moreover, CEIR receives three copies of each issue of *Clarion*; in turn, the CCCNA receives several copies of each issue of the denominational magazine, *New Horizons*, and the annual *Directory* (or yearbook). A letter of fraternal greeting was sent both to the 80th (2013) and 82nd (2015) General Assemblies.

From the CEIR the committee received invitations to the 80, 81st and 82nd and General Assemblies. It also received the minutes of the 80th and 81st General Assemblies. At the time of writing, the committee is awaiting receipt of the minutes of the 82nd GA.

3. Annual Meetings with the CEIR

Since the report to Synod Carman 2013 the CCCNA has met three times with the CEIR.

3.1 We met on November 19, 2013 at the North American and Presbyterian Reformed Council (NAPARC). In this meeting we pursued mandate 4.3 of General Synod Carman 2013. The CEIR members were all able to affirm that the 2001 agreement is functioning well. Furthermore, they did express their surprise and disappointment that the agreement was part of the mandate and wondered if it was occasioned by any particular offense on their part. The CCCNA was able to make very clear that no particular offense occasioned this mandate but that it arises from the concerns raised by a small number of churches within the CanRC.

Further to the mandate of Synod Carman 2013 we can report that it is the shared desire of our committees to be mandated to work together on new items rather than belaboring the issues of the past. For more on this matter we refer to point 5 of the General Report of the CCCNA to General Synod Dunnville 2016.

3.2 We met on June 6, 2014 as the CEIR had organized a colloquium with the fraternal delegates and observers during the 81st GA. Discussion took place on how to help one another fulfill our task as churches, especially in bringing the gospel to the world. The ensuing discussion brought out how ecclesiastical relations are beneficial for the life of the respective churches in enabling the sharing of resources and studies in dealing with all kinds of issues.

3.3 We met on November 15, 2014 at NAPARC, Grassie, ON. In this meeting the brothers of the CEIR reported on the following:

3.3.1 Relations with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil

The CEIR of the OPC informed us of a developing ecclesiastical relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. The PCB approached them after the PCB had broken off contact with the PCUSA. This church sees the OPC as its “mother church” and thus sought fellowship with it. They have invited the OPC into a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship. Since the PCB General Assembly meets every four years they have some time to respond to this request. Members of CEIR attended a recent General Assembly of the PCB. The Presbyterian Church of Brazil is a church comprising about a million members. When their assembly met, more than 1100 men were present as delegates. In evaluating the request for fellowship the OPC, the CEIR gave attention to a major item on the docket of the General Assembly. While the PCB is, in principle, against the ordination of women to the offices, one of the Presbyteries has asked: is it permissible for women to preach under the oversight of session?

The CEIR addressed the assembly on the fact that this matter was a concern for them, and will review this matter when it is concluded at another session of the assembly. The GA was adjourned and is to be reconvened at a later date to come to a decision on this matter.

It was noted that some of the theological students of the PCB are studying at Greenville Theological Seminary, giving another point of contact between the Presbyterian Church of Brazil and the OPC. While in Brazil, the members of CEIR met informally with CanRC missionary Rev. Julius Van Spronsen and mission worker Chris Boersema

3.3.2 Report on study committee for the republication of the covenant of works

One of the Presbyteries of the OPC has faced significant struggles on the issue of the republication of the covenant of works. As a result the General Assembly has appointed a study committee on this issue.

An explanation was given on what this issue is about. Some believe that the Mosaic covenant is a republication of the covenant of works. The idea is that Israel had to do works in order to remain in the land, but that they needed God's grace to be received into heaven. This is applied today in such a way that members need to obey the commandments to retain membership of the church, but need God's grace in Christ to receive eternal salvation. Somehow, this view is tied to the two kingdom viewpoint.

A deep rift has developed in one of the Presbyteries and the conflict has become quite personal. As a result, the General Assembly appointed a study committee and also made a visitation committee available should its help be requested by the Presbytery. Such a request did come forth in September 2014, and this matter is being dealt with.

3.3.3 Review of questions according to the OPC rules for ecclesiastical fellowship

One of the significant questions that the OPC asks churches in ecclesiastical fellowship is: *Are there specific occasions where you believe we have failed to live up to our commitments to you or have caused you grief?* (For all the questions see 3.3.6 below.) We could respond by stating that the OPC has not caused us any grief; on the contrary, we find great joy in our fellowship together.

At the same time the brothers of the CCCNA were able to report on the following to the CEIR:

3.3.4 Answer to OPC's prior query on the CanRC's favourable vote to admit the CRC Australia to membership in the ICRC.

The OPC had expressed perplexity that the Canadian Reformed Churches voted in favour of the CRC of Australia's application to be members of the ICRC. Their perplexity arises from the fact that the OPC are concerned that the CRC of Australia is having a negative influence on the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. We responded by passing on a letter from the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad. They explained that they supported the CRC of Australia's application to join the ICRC because of the reforming direction being taken by this church. They are moving away from non-reformed ecumenical bodies, and want to see the ICRC as their spiritual home.

3.3.5 Request for clarification on the OPC entering into entering into EF with the Independent Reformed Church of Korea.

The OPC has entered into ecclesiastical fellowship with the IRCK. This church is a consciously confessional church. This relationship arises out of a mission situation. One of the OPC missionaries in China developed contact with this church. The OPC also has an indigenous candidate moving into a church planting situation.

3.3.6 Report on CanRC's relationship with Reformed Churches of the Netherlands

The last Synod of the CanRC appointed a sub-committee to the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad to deal with the struggles we are facing in our ecclesiastical relationship with the RCN. This committee recently issued an interim report, and a copy of this report and a website link to it was passed on.

In conclusion to this section we would like to highlight for Synod that the questions the OPC uses for discussion with other inter-church relations committees are very helpful to the functioning of our relationship with the OPC. We share them with Synod as to give some context for how our relationship with the OPC is approached from their side.

The agenda of items to be discussed by delegates of both churches during such a meeting will include: Are there specific occasions where you believe we have failed to live up to our commitments to you or have caused you grief? Speaking the truth in love, where do you perceive our testimony or practice to be weak? What, if any, significant changes in policy, doctrine, or practice are pending in your church(es)? What are the significant issues presently under study in the various assemblies of your church(es)? Are there ministries in which we can more closely cooperate? What are the impediments, real or perceived, to the two churches achieving organic unity?

4. Attendance at General Assembly

Delegates of the CCCNA attended the 81st General Assembly of the OPC from June 5-7, 2014 held at Calvin College, Grand Rapids. We brought fraternal greetings from our churches. As a result of our time at the 81st GA we report the following:

- The brotherly relations we have with the OPC was impressed upon us;
- It was reinforced to us that the OPC takes the missionary calling of the church very seriously. This serves as an example to us;
- There was much evidence that the OPC takes the holiness of the congregation and the importance of vows made by members and office bearers very seriously in dealing with ministers and members who deviate in doctrine or life;
- In dealing with appeals it was clear that the OPC seeks to do justice to them;
- Giving a face to the Canadian Reformed Churches once again strengthened the bond between the OPC and the CanRC as there were opportunities to answer questions about the CanRC.

The Lord willing, we will attend the 83rd GA to be convened in Maryland beginning on Wednesday, June 8, 2016, at 7:00 p.m., with a terminus no later than 12:00 Noon, Tuesday, June 14, 2016. The 83rd GA will also be combined with the celebration of the 80th Anniversary of the OPC.

5. Considerations

In light of the information found in the sections 2-4 above the CCCNA deems that it has fulfilled the three-fold mandate given to it by Synod Carman, 2013. In particular we trust that section 3.1 addresses the specific mandate to give particular attention, together with the CEIR, to the functioning of the 2001 agreement.

6. Recommendations

The CCCNA recommends that Synod decide:

6.1 To thank the LORD for the way in which the OPC actively provides a faithful Reformed witness to the gospel.

6.2 To mandate the CCCNA to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC under the adopted rules.

6.3 To no longer mandate the CCCNA to specifically deal with the items of confessional membership and admission to the Lord's Supper. These items which arose in the context of two churches leaving the OPC (and ultimately joining the CanRC), have been repeatedly and thoroughly discussed and reported on since Synods 1983 (Article 55, p.38ff) and 1986 (Article 136, p.61ff).

Report 3. The Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

Introduction:

The Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) currently consists of 51 churches or church plants with a total membership of 3,674 members at the end of 2013. The churches are scattered among fourteen states: Arkansas [1], California [14], Colorado [3], Iowa [1], Minnesota [3], Missouri [1], Nebraska [4], N. Dakota [4], Ohio [1], Pennsylvania [1], S. Dakota [14], Texas [1], Wisconsin [1], and Wyoming [2].

The churches are divided into four classes: Classis Covenant East [927 members], Classis North Prairies [498 members], Classis South Central [1,393 members], and Classis West [856 members].

About 50 ministers, 118 elders and 108 deacons serve the churches. Seven (7) ministerial students are under their care, attending various seminaries that have been approved and are supported by the church.

The RCUS supports foreign mission works in the Congo, Kenya, and the Philippines and also supports Reformed Faith & Life. In the USA, the RCUS supports mission works through its churches in Casper (WY), Omaha (NE), Eden Prairie (MN), Rogers (AR), Dickenson (ND), Los Angeles (CA) as well as a Hispanic outreach in Shafter, CA.

The RCUS holds an annual general synod with the most recent synod held from May 18 – 21, 2015 in Menno, SD and attended by about 47 ministers and 32 elders. The next synod (their 270th) is scheduled for May 16-19, 2016 in Bakersfield, CA.

Further Information about the RCUS may be obtained by visiting its website: www.rcus.org.

General Synod Neerlandia 2001 of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) established Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the RCUS (*Acts General Synod Neerlandia 2001, Arti.59*).

1. Mandate:

General Synod Carman 2013 gave the following mandate to the CCCNA concerning the RCUS (*Article 93*):

4.2.2. To mandate the CCCNA to continue the relationship of EF with the RCUS under the adopted rules and to endeavour to meet regularly to discuss matters of mutual concern and edification, giving attention to the matters of Lord's Day observance and admission to the Lord's table.

The CCCNA, on behalf of the CanRC, continued the relationship of EF by adhering to the rules for EF adopted by Synod Lincoln 1992 (Article 50). The dialogue between the CanRC and RCUS took place via the annual meetings at NAPARC with their Inter-church Relations Committee (IRC) and by attending their annual general synods in 2014 and 2015. Dr. Maynard Koerner attended and addressed our General Synod Carman 2013 as a fraternal delegate. (see the address in the *Acts General Synod Carman 2013, Appendix 11* beginning on page 326) and our

delegates made use of the invitations received to address their General Synods in 2014 and 2015.

2. Correspondence:

As per rule 2 of EF the IRC received the *Acts of General Synod Carman 2013*. Moreover, the IRC receives two subscriptions to *Clarion* and a third subscription is given to the editor of the *Reformed Herald*.

From the IRC the CCCNA receives invitations to every general synod and receives a copy of the Abstracts of these synods. These abstracts are also available through their website.

3. Annual Meetings with the IRC:

Since the report to General Synod Carman 2013 the CCCNA has met with the IRC at each of the annual NAPARC meetings in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Matters discussed during the November 18, 2013 at NAPARC included:

3.1.1. Blue Bell, PA congregation (formerly of the CanRC): The RCUS reported on the labours of two RCUS pastors helping at Blue Bell, PA. The Blue Bell congregation had decreased in size to the extent that it would no longer function as a congregation. Its members have since joined a local RCUS congregation.

3.1.2 The RCUS requested a discussion about the CanRC position in regards to the place of children within the covenant to ensure a correct understanding in light of their interaction with the men at Blue Bell. The Heidelberg Catechism (LD 26, 27), the Canons of Dort (chapter 1, Article 17) and sections from page 340 of the Acts of General Synod 2013 related to the Federal Vision were mentioned in the discussion. Both churches hold to the same confessions so the result of the discussion was a common conclusion. A copy of the booklet, “*The Privilege of Parenting*” written by Rev. Clarence Bouwman explaining the CanRC Form of Baptism for Infants was provided to the RCUS delegates.

3.1.3 Developing Relationships between the RCUS and CanRC: The Redeemer CanRC in Winnipeg hosted a conference on Oct 18 & 19, 2013 on “Promoting a Biblical Sexual Morality” with Rev. S Powell being the conference speaker. Rev. Powell was the main author of a report on this subject accepted by the RCUS synod in 2012. (More information of this report can be found in the CCCNA report to CanRC General Synod Carman, 2013 and in the Abstract of the 266th synod of the RCUS.) Rev. Powell accepted the invitation to proclaim the Word for both services on October, 20, 2013 and to administer the sacrament of baptism during one of those services.

3.1.4 The *Clarion* reprinted an article originally printed in the *Reformed Herald*.

3.1.5 Topics of Interaction with General Synod Carman 2013 decisions

- The RCUS had previously expressed a concern on GS 2010’s decision regarding women voting so there was an appreciation expressed for this synod’s decision. The CanRC brothers cautioned that, with the way our church polity works, this issue may not be settled yet.

- The mutual concern for our sister church in the Netherlands (RCN). The RCUS share similar concerns as our federation and expressed appreciation for the forthright letter General Synod Carman 2013 wrote to the RCN.
- The decline by GS 2013 to extend any fraternal relationship with RPCNA at this time due to their position re: ordained women deacons. The RCUS delegates were questioned as to how the RCUS resolves this situation since it has EF with the RPCNA. The RCUS responded by stating that EF had been extended at a time when the church had a lesser appreciation of the responsibilities connected with offering EF and that it would be considered more thoroughly if EF was requested today. The RCUS mentioned that there is very little interaction with the RPCNA presently. The RCUS sends delegates to RPCNA synods and classis meetings but the RPCNA rarely reciprocates.

3.1.6 In this meeting we briefly pursued our mandate (Article 93, Recommendation 4.2.2) given by General Synod Carman 2013. The IRC members expressed regret and disappointment that issues discussed in the past come up again for discussion. For our brothers, it appears we are attempting to force them to our position, yet these matters were not an impediment to acknowledging them as a true church and entering into EF with them. As a separate church body they acknowledge differences in practices in comparison to ours but consider these as faithful practices within the recognition extended to them by the CanRC that they are a faithful church, *“governing itself according to pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head.”* (BC Art. 28) As CCCNA we deferred further discussion on this matter.

3.2 Matters discussed during the November 11, 2014 at NAPARC included:

3.2.1 The RCUS had requested a discussion about the CanRC position on the length of time regarding the six days of creation. It was commented that the CanRC does not make position statements, but its assemblies make deliberative judgments if an issue arises before it. We keep to the confessions and make no statements beyond them. It was mentioned that some members are looking for room within the confessions and that candidates for the ministry may be, but are not necessarily, examined on this. It was also stated that the expectation within the CanRC churches is for ministers to preach a literal six sequential days of creation consisting of six normal, regular days in terms of length.

3.2.2 The rules of Ecclesiastical Fellowship were also discussed in light of the RCUS entering into an ecclesiastical fellowship with the United Covenant Reformed Church in the Philippines (UCRP). The rules of the CanRC state, “The churches shall consult each other when entering into relations with third parties” while the rules of the RCUS state, “Will inform one another regarding new relationships with third parties and membership in ecumenical organizations.” Since each church body follows its own set of rules the words “consult” and “inform” may function differently for each body. According to our rules the RCUS should have consulted us prior to the decision, but according to their rules, the RCUS has only to inform us of new relationships. The RCUS did inform the CanRC Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) after it had made the decision to enter into EF with the UCRC in the Philippines and now informed this committee that it had received an initial contact from the Heritage Reformed

Congregations. The RCUS has also established ecclesiastical relations with the Reformed Fellowship Church in Kenya. The CCCNA will forward this information to the CRCA.

4. Attendance at General Synods:

CCCNA delegates attended the annual general synods of the RCUS in 2014 and 2015.

4.1. 268th General Synod of the RCUS (Sutton, NE): Two delegates of the CCCNA attended this synod of the RCUS from its opening on May 19 to almost its closing on May 22, 2014. During that time the delegates had opportunity to meet with various synod members and to actively participate in several synod committees. A delegate was also invited to bring fraternal greetings from our churches. Comments received from a number of synod members indicated great appreciation for the timely input in some discussions and for the CanRC delegates' attendance for almost the whole of synod.

4.2 269th General Synod of the RCUS (Menno, SD): This synod met from May 18 – 21, 2015. For the fourth time Rev. J. Poppe and Br. H. van Delden were able to attend a RCUS synod. Having the same delegates attend synods has the benefit of developing deeper and personal relationships with many RCUS delegates. During the synod the delegates brought fraternal greetings and had the opportunity to fully and actively participate in the synod's inter-church relations committee. The RCUS synod expressed its appreciation for the diligence shown by the Canadian Reformed Churches in exercising their ecclesiastic fellowship responsibilities by attending synod and classis meetings, usually for the attendance for almost the whole of synod. The bond we have with the RCUS continues to grow.

5. Considerations

5.1 The Reformed Church in the United States continues to exhibit the marks of the true church;

5.2 The response of the RCUS IRC to the items specified in the mandate underlines that we are belabouring issues to the point of giving offense to churches with which we have established EF. It is time to consider the discussion on these issues concluded.

5.3. The interaction between the RCUS and the CanRC is mutually beneficial and desirable.

6. Recommendations

The CCCNA recommends that Synod decide:

6.1. To thank the LORD for the way in which the RCUS actively provides a faithful Reformed witness to the gospel.

6.2 To mandate the CCCNA to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCUS under the adopted rules.

6.3. To no longer mandate the CCCNA to specifically deal with the items of Lord's Day observance and admission to the Lord's Supper as they have been thoroughly discussed and reported on since Synod 1992 (Article 79, p.58ff).

Report 4. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

1. Introduction

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) was established in 1798 and currently consists of 6 presbyteries comprised of 88 congregations and 6,786 members. The denomination supports approximately 18 mission works within North America and is very active in at least six mission fields overseas. The RPCNA is a member both of the ICRC and NAPARC. It has formal “fraternal relations” (= our ecclesiastical fellowship) with a number of churches, including these sister churches of the CanRC: Free Church of Scotland (Synod of North America); Orthodox Presbyterian Church; Reformed Church in the United States and the United Reformed Churches in North America. Its Synod meets annually, the most recent one having been held from June 8-12, 2015. Further information about the RPCNA may be obtained by visiting its website: www.reformedpresbyterianchurch.org.

Much information and analysis has been presented to our churches over the years, which need not be repeated here. However, we urge the churches and delegates to Synod Dunnville to study these earlier reports in order to better understand the thrust of this present report and its recommendations. The first report giving a detailed overview of the RCPNA was received by Synod Smithers 2007 (*Report*, Vol.1, p.196-239; see the corresponding decision in the *Acts* of that synod, Art. 163). Synod Burlington 2010 received an investigative report on the Testimony, exclusive psalmody and women deacons (*Report*, Vol. 1, p.188-222; see the corresponding decision in the *Acts*, Art. 77) and a recommendation to offer ecclesiastical fellowship to the RPCNA. Synod Carman 2013 received a much briefer report (*Report*, Vol. 1, p.193-194; see the corresponding decision in the *Acts*, Art. 76). Presently, the CanRC is not in ecclesiastical fellowship with the RPCNA but this report will recommend that General Synod Dunnville proceed to extend that offer.

Later in the appendices you will find the following relevant documents:

- Appendix 1 – CCCNA-West letter to IRC of the RPCNA (Jan 28, 2014)
- Appendix 2 – RPCNA letter of response (March, 2015)
- Appendix 3 – CCCNA-West follow-up letter (May, 2015)
- Appendix 4 – RPCNA follow-up letter of response (May 29, 2015)
- Appendix 5 – Is the Testimony a Reformed Confession? An Investigative Report

2. Mandate

General Synod Carman 2013 gave the following mandate to the CCCNA for its dealings with the RPCNA (*Acts*, p. 60):

4.1 To respond to the letter from the RPCNA

4.2 To investigate and evaluate the way in which the RPCNA understands ordination, the nature and root of the office of deacon and the authority of such an office in light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions;

4.3 To investigate further the nature and status of the Testimony;

4.4 To continue dialogue with the RPCNA at meetings of NAPARC

3. Correspondence

As per mandate 4.1, in early 2014 CCCNA-West sent a detailed letter of response (Appendix 1) to the IRC of the RPCNA in which it also made specific inquiries of the RPCNA regarding the points mentioned in 4.2 of the mandate. In the spring of 2015, a letter of response was received from the IRC (Appendix 2). A follow-up exchange of letters occurred in order to seek additional clarification (Appendices 3 & 4). An evaluation of their overall understanding of the issues raised in mandate 4.2 is given below in section 5.

Meanwhile, CCCNA-West also continued to investigate further the nature and status of the Testimony (as per mandate 4.3) and prepared a detailed summary and evaluation of the Testimony (see further below and Appendix 5). In the summer of 2014, this summary and evaluation was sent to the IRC to ensure accuracy of understanding and to give opportunity for any comment, if desired. To date, no response to this document has been received. CCCNA has also received copies of the minutes of the annual RPCNA Synod for the years 2013 and 2014 with the minutes of 2015 being anticipated.

4. Meetings

Representatives of the CCCNA met with the IRC at NAPARC 2014 with the expectation of another meeting at NAPARC 2015. In the 2014 meeting, having earlier received our letter continuing the dialogue regarding women deacons, the RPCNA brothers elaborated orally on some points and promised to send a written response to our letter by March, 2015. The brothers indicated receipt of the investigative report on the Testimony but had not yet dealt with it internally. The atmosphere and interchange was brotherly, respectful and appreciated by all in attendance.

5. Evaluation of RPCNA position on Women Deacons

As per mandate 4.3, the CCCNA is called upon to evaluate how the RPCNA understands “ordination, the nature and root of the office of deacon and the authority of such an office in light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions.” To assist our churches in arriving at a clear understanding of the entire matter, we draw from the recent correspondence (see Appendices) and official documents of the RPCNA to offer the following salient points:

1. *Different Concepts of Deacon* – It is critical to understand at the outset that the office of deacon in the RPCNA is *considered* differently and in fact *functions* differently than in the CanRC. When we as CanRC hear the RPCNA speak of deacons then our natural (default) understanding is to think they are speaking of the office of deacon as we know it in the CanRC. But this is incorrect. The two churches hold different ideas about the very office of deacon.

As CanRC, both our Belgic Confession and our Church Order (various articles; see the CCCNA-West letter in Appendix 1, p.i-ii) specify that deacons are included with the other office bearers in forming the government of the church: “...there should also be elders and deacons who, together with the pastors, form the council of the church...” (Belgic Confession, Article 30). By contrast, in the Presbyterian tradition generally, there is no historic confessional position with respect to the function of deacons. Instead, the

office of deacon is regulated primarily by church government documents which are not necessarily uniform among the particular Presbyterian church bodies. With respect to the RPCNA in particular, its Constitution deliberately *excludes* deacons from the government of the church. In their congregations, it is the elders and pastor (who form the session) who alone are charged with the oversight or government of the church:

The Diaconate is a spiritual office responsible for the ministry of mercy and stewardship of the congregation. It is neither a ruling nor a teaching office. Its exercise, like the whole life of the church, is under the oversight of the session and its function is administrative.¹

There is a distinct difference here in church polity. This means that we cannot simply equate the office of deacon in the RPCNA – whether male or female – with the office of deacon in the CanRC. The former has no share in ruling/governing while the latter does.

2. *Different Exegetical Starting Point* - From the IRC's letter of March, 2015, the RPCNA finds the biblical sanction for the office of deacon primarily in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8 and only secondarily in Acts 6:1-4. In their explanation, the emphasis is clearly placed on the 1 Timothy 3 passage. Again, this is different from the CanRC and the Continental Reformed tradition generally which finds the biblical root for this office primarily in Acts 6:1-4 (see the CCCNA-West letter in Appendix 1, p.vi). Having these two different starting points leads to two different perceptions about the office of deacon and whether women can participate in this office.
3. *Different Understanding of the Root of the Office of Deacon* - Since the RPCNA looks for guidance on the office of deacon primarily from 1 Timothy 3, it does not consider the root of the office as directly coming out of the Apostolic office as would be the case when one starts with Acts 6:1-4. Based on their exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:11 (see their letter of March, 2015 in Appendix 2, pp.vii-ix), they are convinced that *women* (i.e. not *wives* of male deacons) are not only mentioned here but also sanctioned to hold the office of deacon. Since the RPCNA does not see a connection between the office of Apostle and the office of deacon (as Continental Reformed churches do), and because they understand the office of deacon as unrelated to the government of the church, they find it quite acceptable for a woman to serve in this non-ruling office.
4. *Nuanced Concept of Office and Authority* – The RPCNA distinguishes between the offices of elder and deacon as well as the kind of authority each exercises. The office of elder alone (which includes the ministers as “teaching elders”) is conceived of as having ruling or governing authority with charge over the entire congregation, including the deacons. According to their letter of May 29, 2015 (Appendix 4), the text of 1 Timothy 2:12, which clearly forbids women to have authority over men within the church, is speaking directly to the office of elder and not to the office of deacon. Only once Paul finishes speaking of the office of elder does he then go on in 1 Timothy 3:8ff to speak of the office of deacon. The office of deacon is conceived of as a “serving” office, having no

¹ *The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, p.D-23. This can be found on the RPCNA website: www.reformedpresbyterian.org under the tab, “Convictions”.

share in the ruling/governing of the church, with only a lesser “administrative” authority. When a deacon opens Scripture with a congregant, that is not viewed as an exercise of authority but rather merely pointing a member to the authoritative teaching of Scripture itself. If a member does not follow such instruction, “it is the elder who enters the situation with “authority” and “teaching”” (letter of May 29, 2015).

Once more, this is different from what we have within the CanRC. According to our confessions and church polity, the office of deacon is invested with a measure of governing or ruling authority. As CanRC we do not distinguish between “ruling/governing” authority and “administrative” authority. The concept of “office” within our churches inherently carries with it authority and our deacons exercise their particular authority (in accordance with their scriptural mandate to have charge of the ministry of mercy) over the whole congregation, men included. Because of that understanding and practice, and because 1 Timothy 2:12 forbids women to have authority over men within the church, we as CanRC are clear that we may not ordain women to serve in the office of deacon.

5. *An Exegetical Position* - It is abundantly clear and quite important to see that the RPCNA’s position on women deacons rests on their exegesis of Scripture and not on external factors such as pressure from the surrounding culture or the ideology of feminism. The RPCNA sincerely wishes to guide itself by the Word of God and has honestly sought to understand and put into practice the office of deacon from out of the Scriptures.

As CanRC, we may be frank that we do not find their exegesis convincing. We believe Acts 6:1-4 shows the root and origin of the office and that 1 Timothy 3:11 speaks of the wives of deacons and not of women deacons. We also question the unproven assertion of their March, 2015 letter that the “clear teaching of the New Testament” is “that order in the visible body of Christ (the church) underwent progress in its development.” What is to prevent us from finding the office of deacon in the early days of the NT church as described in Acts 6 and to see there its direct link to the office of Apostle with its inherent authority over the church? Further, we do not find the context surrounding 1 Timothy 2:12 to be speaking in a limited way to the office of elder, nor are we convinced that v.12 itself distinguishes between one sort of authority and another (i.e. speaking only of “ruling” authority and not of “administrative” authority). However – and this is the point we wish to make here – whatever we as CanRC might think of the RPCNA understanding of women and the office of deacon, they are genuinely aiming to follow the Word of God in a Reformed manner.

6. *No “New” Hermeneutic* – There is no evidence of a liberal or “new” hermeneutic (i.e. method of interpreting Scripture) at work here by which the RPCNA is looking at Scripture in an illegitimate way. As mentioned, their position is based on exegesis of Scripture going back some 130 years, so the hermeneutic is at least that old. As sometimes happens among Reformed expositors using the same method of interpreting Scripture, different choices are made along the way and different conclusions are arrived

at. As CanRC, we only have to look at our own history to see how certain Dutch Reformed churches, following John Calvin, once thought it was exegetically justifiable to ordain “deaconesses” to serve a particular role within the church (see the CCCNA letter in Appendix 1, p.ii-iii). In time, Continental Reformed exegesis came to another (arguably, better) understanding (as we have it presently). In the view of the CCCNA, this is the crux of what lies behind the different views on deacons between the RCPNA and the CanRC: it is a difference in exegesis.

7. *Firm on Ruling Authority Limited to Men* – The RPCNA is crystal clear that the office of elder (minister) as an office of ruling authority is absolutely prohibited to the sisters of the church on the basis of 1 Timothy 2:12.² The RPCNA has never wavered on this point. The position of women deacons came into existence in the 1880s and in the last 130 (plus) years has not led on to women elders. In fact, the RPCNA itself cut ties with the Christian Reformed Church of North America in the early 2000s (also voting to terminate its membership within NAPARC) when the CRCNA decided to open the office of elder to women. This shows that the RPCNA position is not liberal or the leading edge of deformation but rather one of principle, based on Scripture.
8. *No Impediment for Ecclesiastical Fellowship* – With the above analysis in mind, we as CCCNA conclude that the RPCNA’s understanding and practice of women deacons should not constitute an impediment for ecclesiastical fellowship. In their particular way of viewing and practicing the office of deacon, the RPCNA does not contravene the clear and undisputed biblical command to prohibit women from exercising authority over men within the church. As CanRC, it would be fitting for us to express to the RCPNA our disagreement with their exegesis and resulting position on women deacons and to encourage their further reflection on the matter, while at the same time (given that the RPCNA exhibits the marks of the true church) offering to the RPCNA the bonds of ecclesiastical fellowship.

6. Evaluation of the Testimony

6.1 Introduction

As per mandate 4.3, the CCCNA is to “*to investigate further the nature and status of the Testimony.*” To understand this mandate, it is necessary to consider the wider context of Art.76 of the *Acts of Synod Carman 2013* and what it says about the Testimony:

Observation 2.15 states,

Ancaster, London, and Grand Rapids drew attention to the RPCNA Testimony, a part of their constitution and functioning on the same level as the Westminster Standards, asking that it, as yet, be thoroughly studied and evaluated for its Reformed character.

Consideration 3.4 states, “The nature and status of the Testimony within the RPCNA still needs to be clarified (see Acts of Synod Burlington 2010, Art.77, Consideration 3.6).”

² *Testimony*, Chap. 25.8.

It is important to also note that Consideration 3.6 of the Acts of Synod Burlington 2010, Art.77 states,

It would seem that some of the churches are mistaken in speaking of the *Testimony* as an “extra-confessional” document. In reality, this document has the status of a confession on par with the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. More study would be necessary to determine whether this document is a faithful Reformed confession.

From this we conclude that our task with respect to our mandate from Synod Carman 2013 is twofold:

- 1) To investigate further the nature and status of the *Testimony*;
- 2) To determine whether the *Testimony* is a faithful Reformed Confession.

6.2 *The nature and status of the Testimony*

6.2.1 Background information

The CCCNA provided extensive material regarding the nature and status of the *Testimony* to Synod Burlington-Ebenezer 2010 (see *Report to Synod 2010*, pp.190-196). It may be helpful to repeat here some of the basic information about the *Testimony*:

The RPCNA, like many Presbyterian bodies, holds to the Westminster Standards of 1648. However, they also hold to a confessional document called *The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, a document unique to them. It originates in the early 19th century in the American context. After various modifications and augmentations over the years, General Synod 1980 declared the revised *Testimony* to be the law and order of the church.” (see *Report*, pp.190-191).

This is confirmed by the fact that the RPCNA includes in its Constitution the following standards as being subordinate to the Word of God: The [Westminster] Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the *Testimony*, the Directory for Church Government, the Book of Discipline, and the Directory of Public Worship (see *The Constitution of the RPCNA, 2010*, available at www.reformedpresbyterian.com).

The Constitution presents the Westminster Confession of Faith (1648) and the *Testimony* (2010) in parallel columns. This helps to explain the purpose of the *Testimony*. The CCCNA reported to Synod 2010,

Purpose of the Testimony

The stated objective of the *Testimony* is to support and enhance the teaching of the Westminster Standards by enforcing them and applying them to the issues of the day. This is clear from the Introduction to the *Testimony* as follows: The Westminster Confession of Faith is one of the historic creeds of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches. The RPCNA believes that this confession is based on, and subordinate to, Scripture. The truth it presents is of inestimable value for contemporary society. However, changes in the application of truth are needed because of changing situations in

each generation. Some topics of vital importance for the Christian Church were unknown in the 17th Century. Therefore the RPCNA presents its Testimony applying Scripture truth to the contemporary situation. (*Introduction:9,10*).

The CCCNA concluded,

From this it is clear that the Testimony does not add any new doctrine to the Westminster Confession but endeavours only to elucidate and apply the existing doctrine to the realities of the present day. (see *Report*, p.191)

The CCCNA also reported to Synod 2010 about the status and function of the Testimony:

The Status and Function of the Testimony

The status of the Testimony is spelled out in the Introduction: All of these documents, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, are of equal authority in the church; except that where noted, earlier documents are to be interpreted by the later ones. (*Introduction: 4*).

The CCCNA concluded,

From this it is clear that the Testimony is a confessional document and is even the controlling lens through which the Westminster Confession of Faith is interpreted. In answer to our further inquiries about the standing of the Testimony and how it functions as an interpretive lens, the Inter-church Relations Committee (IRC) of the RPCNA provided this helpful explanation:

“The RPCNA affirms its full commitment to the WCF as its doctrinal standard. At no point does the church alter its stand on the place of Scripture or the theological position of the WCF. However, in developing the Testimony, the Church seeks to meet the need to help our people to understand, follow and apply the Scriptures and the doctrines of the WCF in the context of daily life.

Along with each chapter of the WCF, the Testimony provides helpful commentary on the meaning of the doctrines set forth. In some cases, the Testimony develops additional aspects of doctrines such as the means of revelation (1:5-8), the work of the Holy Spirit (2:6-15), the error of the theory of evolution (4:3-5), the sin of gambling (5:4), evangelism (10:6-10), praise in worship (21:5,6), covenanting (22:8,9), response to civil government (23:2-31), marriage and the family (24:1-34), church officers (25:7-13), church membership requirements (25:15-17), the error of oath-bound societies (25:19), the error of enslavement to alcohol, tobacco or any habit forming drug (26:4-7), and the errors of teaching on purgatory and reincarnation (32:4,5).

In two cases – the duty of the civil magistrate (23:18 [cf. also 31:2]) and prohibition of marriage to a deceased wife’s sister, etc. (24:21,22) - the Testimony rejects the position of the WCF. This would not close the door to confessional unity with other Reformed bodies that adhere to the

WCF since other Presbyterian bodies have removed these sections from the WCF. To maintain historical integrity, we have not removed them, but have indicated our disagreement.

The CCCNA commented,

While to our ears it may sound strange that the RPCNA takes pains to distance itself from certain statements within its own official Confession, yet within the history of Presbyterian churches this is more often done with the WCF and also on these same matters. For example, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has gone further than the RPCNA by actually making changes to the WCF to correct the same points regarding the magistrate (WCF 23:3 and 31:2) and consanguinity (WCF 24:4). More importantly, the actual changes made by the RPCNA to these doctrines through its Testimony are fully justified as they are in complete harmony with Scripture. Indeed, we would have a great deal of difficulty with any denomination that would uphold those points of the original Westminster Confession of Faith (*Report*, p.191-192).

6.2.2 Evaluation regarding the nature and status of the Testimony

1) The testimony is not an extra-confessional document

Synod Burlington 2010 summarized the concerns of 21 different churches with respect to the CCCNA report. Article 77 of the *Acts of Synod Burlington 2010* lists various concerns about the Testimony in its observations section. One concern was: “Churches should not be bound by extra-confessional documents” (Observation 2.9.14).

Synod dealt with this concern in its considerations. It noted, “It would seem that some of the churches are mistaken in speaking of the Testimony as an “extra-confessional” document. In reality this document has the status on par with the Westminster Confession and Catechisms...” (Consideration 3.6).

The CCCNA would agree with that perspective!

2) The Testimony is in fact one of the RPCNA’s confessional standards

There has been some uncertainty as to whether the Testimony is merely an authoritative interpretive lens through which the Westminster Confession is read, or whether it is in fact one of the RPCNA’s confessional standards. In their report to Synod Burlington-Ebenezer 2010, the CCCNA concluded the following about the status and function of the Testimony: “From this it is clear that the Testimony is a confessional document and is even the controlling lens through which the Westminster Confession of Faith is interpreted” (*Report*, p.191).

When asked whether this was a correct assessment, the Inter-church Relations Committee of the RPCNA answered in a nuanced way. It stated:

The RPCNA affirms its full commitment to the WCF as its doctrinal standard. At no point does the church alter its stand on the place of Scripture or the theological position of the WCF. However, in developing the Testimony, the Church seeks to meet the need to help our people to

understand, follow and apply the Scriptures and the doctrines of the WCF in the context of daily life (*Report*, p.192).

On the one hand the RPCNA subscribes to and upholds the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) as one of their doctrinal standards. Out of respect for the historic foundation of the WCF they maintain the original wording of the 1648 edition, without any amendments. Considering when the WCF was written, it has language from another era, and has not been put into modern English. It also contains certain statements about the civil magistrate and consanguinity that the RPCNA now understands in a different way. It has not gone through a revision like the Belgic Confession underwent in 1905 with respect to the civil magistrate. When you read through it, there are sections that are more difficult to understand. Yet because the RPCNA is a confessional church, they maintain the wording of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Yet at the same time, there is recognition in the RPCNA that confessions need to serve the members of the church. Thus, alongside their Confession of faith, in a parallel column, the RPCNA has adopted the Testimony as part of the Constitution of their church. At times the Testimony simply restates the main point of the WCF in more simple language. Yet that is not all that the Testimony does. At times it also applies the teaching of the WCF to areas that are relevant to the lives of Christians today. For example, when speaking about the doctrine of creation, the Testimony opposes the theory of evolution, something that was not an issue when the confessions were written. When speaking about God's providence it details how gambling is a sin and warns against a variety of different forms of gambling. These are but two simple examples. Yet throughout, the Testimony gives evidence of a deep understanding of the Word of God, and teaches church members about how to understand, follow, and apply the doctrines of the WCF in daily life. It is very instructional to read through the Testimony; it is a document that we can learn from.

From this one could conclude that the Testimony is merely an interpretive lens through which the Westminster Confession is read. Yet it is more than that. Synod Burlington 2010 recognized this in Article 77, Consideration 3.6. It concluded, "In reality, this document has the status of a confession on par with the Westminster Confession and Catechisms."

This is clear from the vows taken by those entering into communicant membership of the church. One of the questions they are asked at their profession of faith is: "Do you promise to submit in the Lord to the teaching and government of this church as being based upon the Scriptures and described in substance in the *Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America?*..." (RPCNA Constitution 2010, p.253). The fact that the Testimony is part of the Constitution of the RPCNA, and that those desiring to enter into communicant membership are asked to give their assent to it shows that it functions as one of the doctrinal standards of the RPCNA.

The same applies to those entering into the offices of the church. One of the queries for ordination, installation, and licensure is: "Do you believe in and accept the system of doctrine and the manner of worship set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as being agreeable

to, and founded upon, the Scriptures?” (RPCNA *Constitution 2010*, p.254). The fact that office-bearers and those desiring to speak an edifying word are required to agree that the Testimony is agreeable to and founded upon the Scripture shows that the Testimony is part of the RPCNA’s doctrinal standards.

Thus, in conclusion we can report the following about the status and function of the Testimony. It is part of the Constitution of the RPCNA, one of the confessional documents of the church. Members subscribe to it through their profession of faith, and office-bearers believe in and accept the system of doctrine and manner of worship set forth in it as being agreeable to and founded upon the Scriptures. The Testimony has the status of a confession of the church.

6.2.3 Is the Testimony a faithful Reformed Confession?

Introduction

As noted above, the purpose of the Testimony is to provide clarifying comments on the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). For this reason, it is printed in the RPCNA’s Constitution in parallel columns alongside the WCF. As committee, we have systematically investigated the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Testimony to determine whether the Testimony is a faithful Reformed Confession. In doing so we have provided a detailed summary of how the Testimony adds to, explains, and applies the WCF for the church today (see Appendix 5). At this point in our report we simply wish to highlight some of the major characteristics of the Testimony and then present the conclusion of our study.

- To begin, it is noteworthy that the Testimony adds a lengthy introduction before dealing with Art. 1 “Of the Holy Scripture.” In this introduction the RPCNA stresses that the covenant concept lies at the heart of the WCF. The RPCNA is very much a covenantal church. That does not just come through in their Testimony; it is also clear when we as CCCNA interact with their Inter-Church Relations Committee.
- Chapter 4 of the Testimony opposes the theory of evolution.
- Chapter 21 of the Testimony makes clear that the RPCNA practices exclusive psalmody, and that they are opposed to the use of musical instruments in worship. It also makes provision for religious fasting as an ordinance of God and prescribes how it should take place. While we do not agree with the exegetical foundations for taking such positions, for us these are minor points of ecclesiastical practice and do not form an impediment for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship (see Church Order, Art.50 and *Acts of Synod Burlington*, Art. 77, Consideration 3.5).
- Chapter 23 of the Testimony speaks to the RPCNA’s practice of “covenanting.” They believe that it is the responsibility of every nation to enter into covenant with Christ and serve to advance His Kingdom on earth. As committee, we question the Biblical basis for this. In the old covenant, God established a relationship with Israel, his covenant people. In the new covenant, God’s establishes a covenant with believers and their children. We do not see Biblical warrant for nations (made up of believers and unbelievers) to covenant with God.

- The Testimony also assigns a role for the church in political matters. It states, “Both the Christian and the Church have a responsibility for witnessing against national sins and for promoting justice” (Chap. 23.22). And a little later, “It is the duty of the Christian Church to testify to the authority of Christ over the nations, against all anti-Christian, atheistic, and secular principles of civil government, and against all sinful oaths of allegiance to civil governments...” (Chap.23.28). As committee, we would stress that the church’s responsibility is a spiritual one: to preach the gospel, to gather the believers into fellowship and build them up in the faith. We would say that while individual Christians have a mandate to be involved in society and in politics, we do not see Scriptural warrant for the church’s task in politics.
- The Testimony also speaks about the civil magistrate. The Testimony makes it clear that the RPCNA does not subscribe to what the WCF teaches about the civil government’s involvement in spiritual matters in the church (see Chap. 23.18). We would agree!
- Chapter 24 of the Testimony opposes part of the WCF’s teaching about consanguinity. We would agree with the Testimony that Scripture permits marriage to a deceased wife’s sister or a deceased husband’s brother.
- Chapter 25 of the Testimony addresses matters relating to the church. It is important to note that deacons have a different role in the RPCNA than they do in our churches. This matter is dealt with elsewhere in our report.

6.3 Concluding Evaluation

To determine whether the Testimony is a faithful Reformed Confession, we can note that most of the chapters of the Testimony provide an explanation of Scriptural doctrines in harmony with the revealed Word of God. There is disagreement on some issues where we are of the opinion that Scripture does not support their exegesis. We may, however, applaud their intent on some of those issues. The points on which we would disagree with the Testimony (with the exception of the office of deacon as dealt with elsewhere in this report) do not contradict any doctrine summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. As CanRC, we have agreed in Article 50 of the Church Order that “on minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected.” As Committee, we are of the opinion that the issues of ecclesiastical practice on which we would express disagreement or reservation are, in fact, minor. Further, these disputed points of doctrine within the Testimony take nothing away from the marks of the true church which are clearly found in the RPCNA.

On the whole, we may conclude that although there may be disagreement the Testimony is a faithful Reformed Confession, our points of concern notwithstanding. For the purposes of entering into ecclesiastical fellowship, we suggest the way forward would be for our federation of churches to consider the Testimony a faithful confession while registering our conscientious objections/reservations to particular points as raised in this report.

7. Considerations

1. After significant preliminary study, the CCCNA first reported in detail to Synod 2007 that the RPCNA exhibits the marks of the true church. After further study into particular areas of concern highlighted by Synod 2007, the CCCNA was able to confirm in its report to Synod 2010 that the RPCNA indeed exhibits the marks of the true church.
2. Based on the presence of these marks, the CCCNA recommended to Synod 2010 that an offer of ecclesiastical fellowship be extended to the RPCNA. That recommendation was deemed premature by Synod 2010 as some particular matters of concern needed to be cleared away first. Following Synod 2013, only two issues of concern remained to be further examined: women deacons and the Testimony.
3. Having more thoroughly investigated the matter of women deacons, it is clear that the RPCNA concept and practice of the office of deacon is different than in the CanRC churches. This difference arises from a different exegesis of Scripture. They also work with a different church polity where deacons form no part of the ruling/governing body of the church. While the CanRC is not in agreement with the exegesis, yet as the RPCNA understands and practices the office of deacon and opens it to women, it is not in disobedience to Scriptural teaching. As such, it does not form an obstacle to ecclesiastical fellowship.
4. Having more thoroughly investigated the Testimony, it is clear that this is essentially a formal Confession within the RPCNA and that it is Reformed in nature. While the CanRC may express disagreement on certain exegetical conclusions and doctrinal statements within the Testimony, there is nothing within this document that detracts from the marks of the true church and thus there is nothing in it that forms an obstacle to ecclesiastical fellowship.
5. While there may be a desire by some to delay entering EF until uniformity of understanding and practice regarding women deacons and the Testimony has been reached, it should be recognized that EF does not require such uniformity. There is nothing to be gained by mandating the committee to study the matters yet further. Synod will need to decide whether the RPCNA can be accepted as it is or whether the disagreements are so great that EF is not possible.
6. As mentioned in the *Report* to Synod 2010 (p.197-198), ecclesiastical fellowship with the RPCNA has the very real potential to be meaningful in a practical way as a number of our congregations exist in close proximity to each other.

8. Recommendations

The Committee recommends that Synod decide:

1. To express gratitude to the Lord for the positive developments within our contact with the RPCNA;
2. That the various reports of the CCCNA over the years demonstrate that the marks of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ are evident in the RPCNA;
3. That the practice of the RPCNA to ordain women deacons has been sufficiently investigated and do not present an obstacle to the establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship.

4. That the nature and status of the Testimony have been sufficiently investigated and do not present an obstacle to the establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship.
5. To offer a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship to the RPCNA under the adopted rules, informing them that we disagree on their position of ordained women deacons and disagree or have some reservations on certain points of exegesis and doctrine within the Testimony.

Report 5. The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)

1. Introduction

The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) is a fellowship of thirteen churches based on subscription and adherence to the Bible as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession of Faith. Its purpose is to facilitate discussion on common issues, to study matters of shared concern, to exercise the promotion of the Reformed faith, and to promote collaboration, where feasible, in works of mission, relief, etc. Any decisions of NAPARC are advisory only, and do not affect the autonomy of member churches. The CanRC has been a member of NAPARC since 2008. For further information see the website: www.naparc.org.

Later in the appendices you will find the following documents:

- Appendix 6 – CCCNA letter to Committee of Review re: Revised Constitution and Bylaws
- Appendix 7 – Committee of Review letter of response
- Appendix 8 – NAPARC’s Revised Constitution (2014)
- Appendix 9 – NAPARC’s Revised Bylaws (2013)

2. Mandate

Synod Carman 2013 (Article 77, p. 66) mandated the CCCNA with respect to NAPARC as follows:

4.2 To mandate the CCCNA to continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC and to continue its active involvement in it.

4.3 To mandate the CCCNA to raise in discussion at NAPARC what may be perceived as a tension between Article 4 of the NAPARC constitution on “The Nature and Extent of Authority,” and the last sentence of 5.2 on “Membership,” namely, “Those churches shall be eligible for membership...[which] maintain the marks of the true church (pure preaching of the gospel, the Scriptural administration of the sacraments, the faithful exercise of discipline.”

Mandate 4.2 is reported on below under Section 3 while mandate 4.3 is reported on under Section 4.1 (see also Appendices 6&7).

3. Annual Meetings of NAPARC

Regarding mandate 4.2, the committee participated in the NAPARC meetings held each November in 2013, 2014 and hopes to do so again, DV, in 2015. Four delegates (two from sub-committee East and two from sub-committee West) were sent to each meeting. The main agenda items included reports of each member church on its synod or general assembly, significant decisions, concerns of a theological or practical nature, mission works and the like. Discussion and prayer followed each church’s report. On a designated evening, a “key-note” address was provided by an invited speaker, which was followed by discussion. One new church has applied and received membership in NAPARC, namely the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin), an application explained to and supported by Synod Carman 2013 (see *Acts*, Art. 78).

Of particular interest to our churches is that in 2013 the chairmanship of NAPARC (which rotates annually among member churches) fell for the first time to the CanRC and was handled by a member of sub-committee West, Rev. Holtvlüwer. Additionally, the hosting duties (which also rotate annually among the member churches) fell in 2014 for the first time to the CanRC. The Covenant CanRC in Grassie, Ontario graciously permitted their facilities to be used for this purpose. As well, under God's blessing, excellent cooperation was experienced from many within that congregation to make this event a success.

NAPARC 2014 offered a first-time challenge to organizers as it marked a time of transition within NAPARC's schedule, agenda, and added events. NAPARC 2013 had decided to add various points to its agenda, extend the length of subsequent meetings by an additional day, and to include a "devotional service" overseen by the host church (more on these details below). Grassie consistory was found willing to oversee the latter and Dr. G.H. Visscher, principal of CRTS, was found willing to lead the service. The following evening, Mr. H. VanDooren was invited to speak about Christian Day Schools and the importance and many benefits of educating our youth in a Christian, Reformed manner. As hosts, with thankfulness to our heavenly Father, we look back on NAPARC 2014 as an upbuilding time of fellowship, stimulating discussion and devotion to the Lord.

The CCCNA continues to see the benefit of being involved in NAPARC. As a forum for discussion of issues of common concern and particularly issues which promote unity among member churches, it is useful to exchange insights and consider ways in which we may become closer. Hearing reports from the member churches is both encouraging and motivating, while praying for one another is both necessary and edifying since all member churches must constantly battle against the three sworn enemies of the devil, the world, and our own flesh. Mission work and particular projects sometimes connect or overlap between member churches and sharing this information at NAPARC can be the beginning of good cooperation in such endeavours.

Besides participating in the meeting of NAPARC, the CCCNA has used the occasion to hold meetings with the Inter-church Relations Committees of the ERQ, KPCA (Kosin), OPC, RCUS, and the RPCNA (see elsewhere for more on those relationships). Using NAPARC for these meetings is both efficient and economical and as such an additional benefit of membership in NAPARC. Such meetings allow the various bi-lateral relationships to grow and strengthen.

There is an Interim Committee which prepares the agenda prior to each NAPARC meeting and looks after other organizational matters. Br. Les Vanderveen of sub-committee West presently serves on this committee.

4. New Constitution and Bylaws

In 2009, NAPARC established a Committee of Review (CoR) to review its Constitution and Bylaws. Dr. Riemer Faber of the CanRC served on this committee. At NAPARC 2012, the CoR presented its final report wherein certain changes to both the Constitution and Bylaws were proposed. Each member church was then requested to review the proposal and provide input to the CoR in anticipation of voting on the proposal at NAPARC 2013. The CCCNA reviewed the proposal, providing input and suggesting some changes (see Appendix 6). Many of the proposed

revisions to the Constitution and Bylaws were cosmetic, consisting of word changes and sentence structure. The net effect was an improvement in clarity but also in the intentionality of NAPARC to put into practice the tenets of its own Constitution. Some highlights of the more significant changes are provided in what follows.

4.1 Revised Constitution

Regarding the revised Constitution, the CoR summarized its proposed changes as follows:

1. a more logical division of the original two articles, “Basis” and “Purpose and Function,” into three (the second sentence of the original Basis article being more in the nature of a purpose statement);
2. the addition of a function explicitly to encourage the Member Churches to pursue closer ecclesiastical relations;
3. the addition of a function to operate a website;
4. the addition of activities for young people to the list of areas in which cooperation is promoted;
5. the fleshing out of the nature and extent of NAPARC’s authority;
6. the fleshing out of the membership application process, with the addition of a requirement of being sponsored by at least two Member Churches.

As Canadian Reformed Churches, the 5th point has been a concern raised at recent synods. In response to Synod Carman’s mandate 4.3 (see above), the CCCNA addressed this matter directly to the CoR and received a very illuminating and helpful response (see Appendices 6 and 7). The CoR made it abundantly clear that the Constitution seeks to limit the authority of NAPARC with respect to member churches to making decisions regarding entry into NAPARC itself, and nothing beyond that. Member churches remain free in their own affairs, also in determining whether other churches (even NAPARC member churches) are indeed true churches. Their letter explains the crucial point as follows:

With regard to your particular inquiry, perhaps a way forward is to say that, while a decision of the Council regarding whether a particular federation “profess[es] and maintain[s] the basis for fellowship (*Constitution* II)” and “maintain[s] the marks of the true church” (*Constitution* VI.2) is determinative *solely* for the purpose of adjudicating whether a particular federation is eligible for the status of membership in the Council, it cannot bind the Member Churches in their bilateral relations among themselves. In proposing our amendment to this article, we desired to make it abundantly clear that the Council is not a legislative body: it has no power to make pronouncements on any issues that would bind a Member Church in its own affairs (*cf.* the last sentence of the opening paragraph of *Bylaws* Article V; the first sentence of Article V.2; and Article V.5.b). So for example, if a Member Church votes in the negative on the question of whether to admit a particular federation into membership in the Council, but the vote to admit nevertheless carries with the required two-thirds, then yes, the federation becomes a member of the Council, but the issue of whether that new Member Church maintains the mark of the true church for purposes of the bilateral relations between the two Member Churches has not been settled by the decision of the Council.

It's worthwhile to mention here that the letter of the CCCNA and the CoR's response were both (at the request of the CoR) shared with all the member churches of NAPARC via the docket of the 2013 meeting. No church raised even a question regarding the CoR's explanation. The CCCNA is of the view that this explanation in combination with the revision to Article 5 (note: previously Article 4) of the Constitution should alleviate the concern articulated by Synod Carman 2013.

With respect to the other changes in the revised Constitution, the CCCNA believes them to be either an improvement or at least acceptable. Certainly there is nothing in the changes that warrants a conscientious objection. The revised Constitution requires the approval of two-thirds of the broadest assemblies of the member churches of NAPARC before it is officially adopted. That number was reached by the time NAPARC 2014 was held and so the revised Constitution is presently in effect. At the same time, as a member church with its own responsibilities, the CCCNA recommends that the Canadian Reformed Churches via Synod Dunnville 2016 approve the changes found in NAPARC's revised Constitution and notify NAPARC 2016 of the same.

4.2 Revised Bylaws

NAPARC's Bylaws regulate how it puts into practice the founding statements of the Constitution. As such, there are many detailed and practical matters contained therein which pertain to the "nitty-gritty" of things like meetings, committees, and the duties of officers. The full Bylaws can be found in Appendix 9 while below a few of the key changes are highlighted:

- Bylaw 1 was changed to increase the length of the meetings from two to three days. This was done specifically to allow for more opportunities for churches to schedule meetings with each other – a welcomed change.
- Bylaw 1 was also amended to include the possibility (i.e. "ordinarily") for the host church to hold a "devotional service" on the evening of NAPARC's first day of meeting. Not a regular Lord's Day worship service, such an event is akin to the "prayer service" known in the CanRC, for example, on the evening before each general synod.
- Bylaw 3 was helpfully expanded to give a more detailed description of duties for the Secretary and the Treasurer.
- Bylaw 4 was improved in that each member church was assigned to specifically ask questions of and pray for one other member church. This format generated much more interaction with the reports than in previous years. The prayers were also much more specifically focussed.
- Bylaw 4 also revised the agenda (docket) for NAPARC's meetings to allow for a smoother running of the meeting. More significantly, an item was added that directly pertains to the purpose of NAPARC (see Constitution, Article 2): *Discussion Regarding Progress Towards Organic Union (as proposed by the Interim Committee)*. The CCCNA believes this agenda point has good potential of focussing the plenary discussion at NAPARC on matters related to fostering closer fellowship and unity among member churches.
- Bylaw 9 on "Informational Documents" was added in order to collect, collate and make available to member churches (likely also via the website, in time) most of the significant documents pertaining to or produced by NAPARC or its member churches in the past, such as study papers. This repository may be quite useful for individuals or even

consistories wishing to research particular topics which other Reformed churches may already have undertaken and made available to NAPARC.

The CCCNA found the changes to the Bylaws to be, on the whole, an improvement and could in good conscience support them. Unlike with changes to the Constitution, changes to the Bylaws only require a simple majority vote of NAPARC itself. NAPARC 2013 voted on and passed these changes, also with the approval of the delegation from the CanRC. The CCCNA recommends that Synod Dunnville 2016 simply take note of this fact.

5 . Recommendations

The committee recommends that Synod decide:

- 5.1 To mandate the CCCNA to continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC and to continue its active involvement in it;
- 5.2 To communicate to NAPARC 2016 the agreement of the CanRC with NAPARC's revised Constitution;
- 5.3 To note that NAPARC has revised its Bylaws.

6. Report on Korean Presbyterian Church in America (KPCA)

1. Introduction

The Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA (Kosin)) is a daughter church of the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK) with whom the Canadian Reformed Churches have had ecclesiastical fellowship since 1992. To this day, there remains a very tight bond between the mother and daughter church. The Kosin Korean immigrant community in the United States started the KPCA (Kosin) in 1984.

Beginning with less than 10 pastors, the KPCA (Kosin) has grown to include 135 churches with 185 ordained pastors, 126 ruling elders and approximately 10,300 members in 8 presbyteries. They have 6 chaplains and have sent 24 missionaries to 13 countries.³ Their General Assembly meets annually in the fall, with the next one planned for October 27-30, 2015 in Seattle, WA. The KPCA (Kosin) was admitted to membership in NAPARC in 2013 also with the support of the Canadian Reformed Churches via Synod Carman 2013 (see *Acts of Synod Carman*, p.68). At present, the only fraternal relationship they have is with their mother church in Korea. To our knowledge, they have no English website for their denomination.

Contact between the CanRC and the KPCA (Kosin) was attempted by the CCCA (under synod mandate) in the early 2000s but, due largely to the language barrier, bore little fruit and formal attempts were discontinued by Synod Smithers 2007 (see Art. 152). After that time, some informal acquaintance with the KPCA (Kosin) began to emerge at NAPARC meetings as mentioned by the CCCNA in its report to Synod Burlington 2010 (see *Report*, Vol. 1, p.226). When the KPCA (Kosin) took the initiative to join NAPARC, the CCCNA reported in considerably more detail on this church in its *Supplementary Report to Synod Carman 2013* (see the corresponding decision in the *Acts of Synod Carman*, Art. 78). This supplementary report is printed as Appendix 15 of the *Acts of Synod Carman*. All *Acts* and *Reports* can be found in electronic form at www.canrc.org (under the tab, “Assemblies”).

Later in the appendices you will find the following documents:

- Appendix 10 – A Brief History of the KPCA
- Appendix 11 - Report on Visit to the 30th General Assembly of KPCA (Kosin)
- Appendix 12 – Report on Meeting with the IRC of the KPCA (Kosin) at NAPARC 2014

2. Mandate

Part of the CCCNA’s general mandate is, “To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in North America;” and, “to report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next general synod...” (*Acts of Synod Carman*, Art. 55, 4.1.3 and 4.1.4). In late August 2014, Rev. Holtvlüwer received a written request directly from a representative of the KPCA (Kosin) to attend their upcoming 30th General Assembly in Chicago, IL. He was invited in his (then) dual capacity as chairman of NAPARC as well as a representative of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This marked the first time such a formal invitation from this church was received by the CanRC. It was found feasible to attend and his report is found in Appendix 11.

³ These statistics were reported by the KPCA (Kosin) to NAPARC 2014.

3. Interaction

After the contact made at their 30th General Assembly, a meeting of representatives of their IRC and our CCCNA was held at NAPARC 2014 (see report in Appendix 12). This meeting was helpful to become acquainted with each other's respective churches. A history of each was presented, some questions were exchanged and, over-all, a positive, upbuilding meeting was held. It was agreed to hold another such meeting at NAPARC 2015, the Lord willing.

4. Considerations

1. The KPCA (Kosin) is the daughter church of the Kosin PCK, a church with which the CanRC already has ecclesiastical fellowship. The daughter church has the very same confessional basis as the mother church. Given that this daughter church exists much closer to the CanRC in North America (including some parts of Canada), it makes sense to develop a relationship with the KPCA (Kosin).
2. As has been noted in past and current reports (see Appendices 11-13), the dominant language of the KPCA (Kosin) remains Korean at this time. Official assemblies and worship services are held entirely in Korean. Younger leaders and members are transitioning to English on a personal level but this is not expected to occur broadly on a denominational level in the near term. The language barrier is an impediment to meaningful ties and practical interaction with one another on both the federational and local levels and suggests the wisdom of taking a long-term approach toward formal ecclesiastical fellowship.
3. Although the KPCA (Kosin) is confessionally Reformed and leaders express the desire it remain so and even deepen its Reformed character, certain practices observed within the KPCA (Kosin) suggest a strong undercurrent of non-Reformed influences (see Appendix 11). This too is reason for caution in how and at what rate we develop a relationship as federations. It would be good to learn more about these influences and find ways to assist the Kosin churches in their desire to remain Reformed in the North American context.

5. Recommendations

The Committee recommends that Synod decide:

1. To express gratitude to the Lord for the establishment of contact with the KPCA (Kosin),
2. To mandate the CCCNA to continue dialogue with the KPCA (Kosin) where feasible, with a view to getting to know the KPCA (Kosin) better over time.

Appendices

RPCNA – Appendices 1-5

NAPARC – Appendices 6-9

KPCA – Appendices 10-12

Appendix 1 – CCCNA-West Letter to RPCNA re: Women Deacons

Canadian Reformed Churches

Committee for Contact with Churches in North America - Subcommittee West

c/o Henry van Delden (corresponding clerk)

January 28, 2014

Interchurch Relations Committee of the RPCNA

c/o Br. Bruce Parnell

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! It is good that we may continue our dialogue together as committees and as whole church bodies in the sincere hope that we may one day soon enter into formal ecclesiastical fellowship.

Letter of Response

Our General Synod Carman, 2013 received your letter (including two attachments) in which you addressed our federation's concern with your practice of ordaining women to the office of deacon. Synod Carman mandated our Committee to do two things with respect to this topic:

1. To respond to the letter from the RPCNA;
2. To investigate and evaluate the way in which the RPCNA understand ordination, the root of the office of deacon and the authority of such an office in light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions. (*Acts of Synod Carman 2013*, Art. 76, Recommendation 4.1 & 4.2).

The documents you presented to our synod provided much exegetical argumentation for your practice as well as an understanding of the concept of ordination. Please receive this letter as our written response as well as the beginning of the above-mentioned investigation and evaluation. We invite your reflection on our response and would like to sit with you in person at some future date to discuss these issues further.

Background of Our Concern

As we begin this discussion anew, it may be beneficial to our dialogue to understand why the matter of ordained women deacons is a significant point of concern for the Canadian Reformed Churches. Our concern stems from both our long-standing *confessional* position as well as a clearly-articulated rule in our *church polity*. With our historical roots in the Netherlands, we come out of the Reformed tradition that has adopted and adhered to the Three Forms of Unity as well as the Church Order of Dort. These documents show our understanding

of the office of deacon to be both authoritative (including in a ruling capacity) and restricted to males.

For instance, in Belgic Confession Article 30 concerning the government of the church we confess,

There should be ministers of pastors to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments; there should also be elders and deacons who, together with the pastors, form the council of the church...By these means everything will be done well and in good order when faithful men are chosen in agreement with the rule that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy.⁴ [*emphasis added*]

This confessional position is reflected in our Church Order. While on the one hand the elders and ministers are said to form the “consistory” of the church as the main governing body (Article 38)⁵, on the other hand the “consistory with the deacons” clearly make numerous decisions together in various church government matters. A few examples where the deacons are required to be involved are: the calling to office and election of office bearers (Art. 3), the honourable discharge of a minister (Art. 5, 9), dismissal of a minister (Art. 10), and even suspension and deposition of office bearers (Arts. 26, 71, 72). In practice, the deacons are often involved in many other practical matters of church government (such as financial matters and decisions about church assets). In our churches, the office of deacon is clearly understood as one of authority which shares to an extent in the general government of the church.

For this reason too, the office of deacon has been restricted to male communicant members in our federation of churches. We state this clearly in Article 3 of our Church Order,

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 Tim 3 and Titus 1) shall be eligible for office.

Our Historical Struggle

Before going on to discuss the RPCNA position, we desire to be open and transparent about our own historical struggle with this issue. We wish to relate this as much for our benefit as for yours, so that through this process we as Canadian Reformed Churches may come to rightly understand this matter and determine how best to approach it. Though it may not be as pronounced or well-known as other struggles in our past, the fact is that churches and assemblies early in our Dutch Reformed history did discuss and even in certain cases implemented the ordination of women to the office of deacon. In doing so, they took their point of departure in the writings of our common father in the faith, John Calvin.

Calvin on the Two Kinds of Deacons...and Women

We fully admit that Calvin saw the office of deacon in a way different from how we see it today. He spoke of two kinds of deacons and openly taught that in New Testament times certain

⁴ From the version of the Belgic Confession found in the *Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches (Winnipeg: Premier Printing, 2010) p.513. An electronic copy can be found at www.canrc.org under the tab, “Doctrine”.

⁵ All article references are taken from the version of the Church Order of Dort adopted by the Canadian Reformed Churches and found in the *Book of Praise* (see earlier citation), p.629 and following. An electronic copy can be found at www.canrc.org under the tab, “The Federation”.

women (older widows) were appointed to one of those offices of deacon which he describes as a “public office...to devote themselves to the care of the poor.” Calvin’s line of thinking is made clear in the larger context of this quotation:

The care of the poor was entrusted to the deacons. However, two kinds are mentioned in the letter to the Romans: “He that gives, let him do it with simplicity...he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness” [Rom. 12:8, cf. Vg.]. Since it is certain that Paul is speaking of the public office of the church, there must have been two distinct grades. Unless my judgment deceives me, in the first clause he designates the deacons who distribute the alms. But the second refers to those who had devoted themselves to the care of the poor and sick. Of this sort were the widows whom Paul mentions to Timothy [1 Tim. 5:9-10]. Women could fill no other public office than to devote themselves to the care of the poor. If we accept this (as it must be accepted), there will be two kinds of deacons: one to serve the church in administering the affairs of the poor; the other, in caring for the poor themselves.⁶

Early Dutch Reformed Views

This view of Calvin is reflected in some of the decisions of the earliest Reformed church meetings in northern Germany which involved also leadership from the persecuted Dutch churches. In 1575, the Church Order in use specified that “four deaconesses were to be chosen by the consistory.”⁷ The classis of Wesel, 1580, decided that,

if this office, which had fallen into disuse and decay in the Church of God, is again to be restored, then it shall be established in the same form, and with the same character belonging to it, as described by the apostle Paul; namely, widows, and not married women, should be chosen for that purpose.⁸

The following year this matter came before the Synod of Middelburg. That body decided against the reintroduction of the office “on the account of various inconveniences which might arise out of it; but in times of pestilence, and other sickness, when any service is required among sick women which would be indelicate for the deacons, they ought to attend to it through their wives, or others whose services it may be proper to engage.”⁹

Synod Middleburg 1581 made a clear decision, based on practical reasons, against the introduction of aged widows to the office of deacon. While nearly all the Dutch Reformed churches have held to this decision until this very day, there were some notable exceptions in those early times. For example, the church in Amsterdam as early as 1566 elected certain “aged virtuous sisters” to assist the deacons.¹⁰ Three deaconesses were chosen in 1582 and more followed in subsequent years. This office was continued in the Amsterdam congregation until the days of the French Revolution, a period of some two hundred years.

⁶ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* edited by John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) p.1061 (4.3.9).

⁷ Quoted in Peter Y. DeJong, *Ministry of Mercy for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963) p.242.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.242.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.242.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.243. This information plus that in the rest of the paragraph is taken from this source.

Continental Settledness on Deacons

Since the late 16th century, Dutch Reformed churches have continued to develop their thinking on the exegesis of 1 Timothy 5 and the office of deacon more generally. It is no longer held that Scripture speaks of two kinds of deacons but only one kind of deacon. Deacons are ordained and so entrusted with the ministry of mercy and the authority to carry it out within the congregation. The confessional position (in place since the adoption of the Belgic Confession in the 1570s) that deacons have a share in the government of the church is well-established. It is also no longer held that 1 Timothy 5 speaks of widows as ordained deacons or deaconesses but rather, at most, as non-ordained assistants to the deacons in their care of the poor.¹¹ To be sure, women and their valuable role of service is understood and appreciated by our churches and by those in the special offices (though there is always room for improvement), but the conviction today is that the service (of whatever kind) of the sisters is to be conducted as members of the church and not as ordained officers of the church.

Our Understanding of the Westminster Struggle

As we have reflected on your letter to our recent synod, we have come to see that this matter of women deacons has not only historically been, but also continues to be, one of struggle within your own Westminster tradition. There continue to be differing opinions among faithful Presbyterian believers and even between faithful Presbyterian church bodies. We can see this by your citation of the OPC report on women deacons which itself was divided into a Majority Report and a Minority Report. We note that among some of the bodies within the Westminster tradition in North America, the OPC¹² and the PCA¹³ do not permit women to be ordained as deacons while the ARP¹⁴ and the RPCNA do¹⁵.

All of these denominations are members of NAPARC and are generally considered to be faithful, confessional Reformed bodies. Please correct us if we are wrong, but we take from these facts that the debate over women serving as ordained deacons continues today to unfold largely as an intramural debate among churches of the Westminster tradition. Those faithful churches of the Continental Reformed tradition¹⁶ do not have this struggle presently and so please understand that it takes some doing before we can wrap our minds around the nub of the issue.

As we understand it, this debate has arisen in part because the Westminster Confession itself does not make mention of the office of deacon, much less the matter of female deacons. This has left a vacuum of sorts among the various Presbyterian bodies as to the biblical understanding of this office. In the course of history, different Presbyterian denominations have determined this matter for themselves as worked out practically in their various books of church government.

¹¹ Please note that it has never been held by Calvin or the Dutch Reformed churches that 1 Timothy 3 speaks of women as deacons. This is relevant to our later discussion of the RPCNA view on women deacons.

¹² Orthodox Presbyterian Church *Form of Government*, Chap. 25, part 1.

¹³ *Book of Church Order* of the Presbyterian Church of America, Chap. 9-4 and 7-2.

¹⁴ *Book of Church Order* of the Associate Reformed and Presbyterian Church, Chap. 7.A.1&2.

¹⁵ We may also add that the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) do not ordain women as deacons but rather have the position of Kwonsa, which is essentially older women appointed (but not ordained) to do a specific type of diaconal work. We are also aware that the Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ), who come out of a “mixture” of Continental and Reformed traditions, do allow for the ordination of women to the office of deacon. However, this matter is in the process of being formally discussed in their midst. Synod Carman 2013 has also mandated our CCCNA to take up this issue with them.

¹⁶ With this reference we include all those considered confessional faithful to the Three Forms of Unity.

Appreciation for the RPCNA

Turning now to an interaction with the RPCNA position on women deacons as articulated in your submission to our synod, we would like to begin by expressing our appreciation for the evident care which the RPCNA has taken to base its conclusions on the Scriptures. The two attachments you provided are proof of that. While we have our questions regarding some of those conclusions (more on that below), we are thankful that in this, as in all things, you endeavour to be guided by the Word of God as do we. We hope you will receive our interaction with your exegetical work in this spirit of wanting to be as faithful to Scripture as we can. We are learning and we hope we may sharpen one another as we study this issue more together. We are also heartened to read your affirmation that your “stand taken rests on the exegesis of Scripture and does not reflect a liberalizing agenda.” This is evidenced by your decision in 2002 to “break fellowship with the CRC” when that denomination opened up the office of elder to women. We are also grateful to read in the Adopted Report of Synod 2001 that the RPCNA openly agrees with the statement, “Women may not exercise authority over men in the church.”¹⁷ On these points we have full agreement with you and, more importantly, we stand together on the truth of Scripture.

Some Questions

We also appreciate the significant amount of study that your men have put into this issue and which you attached to your letter. We would like to continue the dialogue with you by taking note of some points which seem to us to have significance by asking you some questions that arise out of your documentation.

We note in the first place that, if we understand things correctly, the RPCNA has officially rejected the exegesis of Calvin on 1 Timothy 5:9-10 wherein he taught that Paul was referring to a special order of widows who would function in the second office of deacon.¹⁸ This seems clear from the statement in your Adopted Report of Synod 2001,

The history since the early church of widows serving in diaconal roles cannot overrule a simple exegesis of these passages that rules out an identity of the widows of 1 Timothy 5:3-16 with the women of 1 Timothy 3:11. Exegesis ought to determine historical practice; historical practice must not determine exegesis.¹⁹

We do not find this objectionable (as noted above) but it does appear to mean that your understanding of women deacons is not the same as that of Calvin²⁰ and therefore has a different historical origin. Would you be able to enlighten us on the historical origin of female deacons within the RPCNA?

In the second place we note that in your exegetical work on the role of women deacons, both the Adopted Report of Synod 2001 and the paper by Christian Adjemian take the passage in 1 Timothy 3 as the starting point. The Report even singles out 1 Timothy 3:11 as the “clearest and most decisive text for the question of women deacons.”²¹ Here, in a spirit of brotherly concern,

¹⁷ See p.2-3 of the cited Report, under “The Second Proposal...”

¹⁸ Calvin derived his teaching on two orders of deacons from Romans 12:8 as cited earlier in footnote #3.

¹⁹ Adopted Report of Synod 2001, p.3.

²⁰ Christian Adjemian in his paper is quite explicit about this matter in his detailed discussion of it in section 4.2, sub-points 1-4 on pages 8-10. He specifically mentions Calvin’s exegesis on this point as being faulty (p.9).

²¹ Adopted Report of Synod 2001, p.3.

we would like to raise a question: is this not over-stated? It is this text (and context) that is the subject of so much debate within the Westminster tradition and there are brothers of the same church body on both sides of the exegetical issue (e.g. within the OPC and even within the RPCNA). It's worth noting that John Calvin never considered it as a passage which spoke about female deacons even though he certainly thought that other passages did and thus he would have been inclined to find such a reference in 1 Timothy 3. It appears to us that 1 Timothy 3 is among the most debated and therefore uncertain texts when it comes to the question of women deacons.

The Root of the Office of Deacon

Our Synod Carman charged us to inquire specifically about how the RPCNA views “the root of the office of deacon and the authority of such an office in light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions.” May we ask: how does the RPCNA view the origin of the office of deacon? Where in Scripture would you find its root and beginnings? And what do those origins teach us about the office of deacon? This seems to be missing in the documentation provided. It is common among the Continental Reformed to refer to Acts 6:1-6 as the root or origin of the office of deacon. While the noun *δίακονος* (deacon) is not found there, the verbal form of it is found in v.2. Many Reformers, including Calvin, believed this passage describes the beginning of the office of deacon. Acts 6:1-4 is footnoted in Article 30 of the Belgic Confession. Acts 6 is also referenced in our Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons:

For the sake of this service of love, Christ has given deacons to His church (Phil 1:1). When the apostles realized that they would have to give up preaching the Word of God if they had to devote their full attention to the daily support of the needy, they assigned this duty to seven brothers chosen by the congregation (Acts 6:1-7). It is therefore the responsibility of the deacons to see to the good progress of this service of charity in the church. They shall acquaint themselves with existing needs and difficulties, and exhort the members of Christ's body to show mercy. They shall gather and manage the offerings and distribute them in Christ's Name, according to need. They are called to encourage and comfort with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's love. They shall promote with word and deed the unity and fellowship in the Holy Spirit which the congregation enjoys at the table of the Lord.²²

We note that concentration on, and an explanation of, this passage appears to be missing from your appended exegetical work. Christian Adjemian mentions Acts 6 four times in passing but does not expound it. The Adopted Report of Synod 2001 briefly mentions it also in passing. Even the essay by Jeff Stivason touches on it briefly and only then to describe it as a text of uncertain contribution to the discussion of the office of deacon more generally:

There is some question as to whether Acts 6 is the appointment of deacons or elders over the Hellenistic Jews. Significantly, there is no mention of the word “deacon” in the text. Moreover, Acts 6 is a very early time in the formation of the NT church which makes it unlikely that there would be a firm and fast system of government already in place.²³

We would ask: if Acts 6 does not describe the origin of the office of deacon, then from where do we know what the nature and purpose of this office is? What (if anything) does this text reveal

²² *Book of Praise*, p.613.

²³ *Essay on Ordination* by Pastor Jeff Stivason as attached to the Adopted Report of Synod 2001.

about this office? Where else does Scripture make known that the office of deacon is a ministry of mercy to the poor and needy? 1 Timothy 3 certainly describes the *qualifications* for those eligible to serve in the office of deacon but it says nothing about what deacons are to *do* in that office. Our conclusion is that Acts 6:1-6 plays a primary role in understanding the origin, nature and purpose of the office of deacon.

Apostles and the Diaconate

If you would agree that Acts 6 does describe the origin of the office of the deacon, we would ask you to think further with us about the implications of this with respect to female deacons, ordination and authority. With respect to the question of female deacons, we are struck by the fact that though the need in Acts 6 clearly involves the care of *widows*, a task seemingly best-suited for women, yet the congregation chose and the Apostles set into office not seven *women* but seven *men*. If it was the Lord's will to include sisters to serve in this office, why would the Apostles have hesitated to do so at this juncture?

Christian Adjemian indicates that the situation in Acts 6 was ripe for female involvement when he writes:

It is very reasonable to see that the "women" mentioned among the deacons in 1Tim 3:11, were women who shared in the ministry of mercy with their male colleagues. There can be little doubt that the men elected in Jerusalem (Acts 6) would have been aided by women for their ministry to the old widows in Jerusalem. Jewish social structure would have required it. By Timothy's day, apostolic directions are given to the diaspora church concerning the qualifications of these women, the qualifications of the men, and even the qualifications of the widows who are to receive aid. The widows were dependent; the women deacons help the church to minister to these dependent older sisters. Paul's instructions show how the Lord is preparing his Church for her post-apostolic mission in the world.²⁴

Dr. Adjemian postulates that there was a development in the matter of deacons (male at first, later female too) from Acts 6 to "Timothy's day" but does not appear to prove that such a development took place. Nor does he offer an explanation as to why the Twelve Apostles did not appoint sisters to the office of deacon (or, if you prefer, it's prototype) in Acts 6 when such would seem to have been opportune, but a few decades later the Apostle Paul apparently had no such hesitation in writing to Timothy.

If we understand the Bible correctly in Acts 6, that would mean that the office of deacon has its roots in the office of Apostle. The work that the seven were appointed to do was work formerly done by the Twelve Apostles. They only gave up this work because it was taking them away from their other (and more primary) task of "the ministry of the Word of God" (Acts 6:2). It is acknowledged by all Reformed and Presbyterian confessors that the office of elder, both the ruling elder and the teaching elder, derives from that of the Apostle. The elder is one of the permanent offices that carry on the primary Apostolic function of the ministry of the Word of God alongside of supervising the flock of God. Does Acts 6 not indicate a parallel root for the other permanent office in the church, that of deacon? And if so, does that not have a bearing on whether sisters may be appointed to this office?

²⁴ Christian Adjemian in *ibid.*, p.10.

The Authority of the Office of Deacon

The Adopted Report of Synod 2001 is quite clear that in the RPCNA the office of deacon has authority but it is described as a specific kind of authority. The Report states:

Again, deacons are ordained to an office of administrative authority.

The diaconate is a spiritual office subordinate to the session and is not a teaching or a ruling office. The deacons *have responsibility for* the ministry of mercy, the finances and property of the congregation, and such other tasks as are assigned to them by the session.” (*The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, Chapter 25, paragraph 11, page A-88; *emphasis added*).

Deacons are ordained to an office which involves *specific* authority for the purpose of fulfilling their *particular* responsibilities. The *authority* conferred through ordination is according to the *work* set aside to. For the Elders, their authority is to rule and teach. For the Deacons, their authority is to administrate; collecting, maintaining and distributing resources to meet the temporal of the congregation, including all relevant spiritual counsel.²⁵ [Emphasis part of the quoted material]

From this we understand that the RPCNA distinguishes between a *ruling* authority and a *servant* or an *administrative* authority. For the RPCNA, these are two different kinds of authority which can and even must be separated from each other in the special offices of the church. The former is granted by the Lord to the office of elder while, in your view, the latter is granted to the office of deacon. Based on 1 Timothy 2:12, the former is open to qualified male members of the church only, while the latter is open to qualified male and female members alike. As you see it, 1 Timothy 2 is limited to *ruling* authority, and thus does not prevent qualified women of the church from exercising *administrative* authority over men as ordained deacons.

If we have understood your views correctly, this leaves questions in our minds concerning the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12. Our first question is about consistency. On p.3 of the Adopted Report of Synod 2001 it states that “We agree with the first two premises,” put forward by another party, the second of which is, “Women may not exercise authority over men in the church (see 1 Timothy 2:12).” While the statement is a blanket statement which makes no distinction in what sort of authority a woman may exercise over men in the church, yet the rest of the Adopted Report clearly does not support such a blanket prohibition. Instead, the RPCNA is clear that women may exercise a certain form of authority over men in the church, namely administrative authority. Have we understood this correctly and, if so, is there a way to clear up this inconsistency?

Secondly, we notice that 1 Tim 2:12 is not exegeted or explained in the documentation you presented but mentioned in passing only with the assumed understanding as explained above. But does 1 Tim 2:12 in fact indicate a distinction between *ruling* authority and *administrative* authority? And does it single out the former for special mention? The text reads: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet” (ESV). All are generally agreed that the context of this passage is referring to the exercise of authority over men *within the church* but does Paul speak *only* here of a ruling or teaching authority? If so, how is that indicated?

The verb used, ἀθρονεῖν (*authentein*), is defined in Bauer’s lexicon as, “to have authority, domineer.” Within itself, this verb does not appear to refer to any form of specialized authority

²⁵ Adopted Report of Synod 2001, p.2.

(i.e. teaching or ruling authority). It's not clear to us that the context necessitates the limitation of authority in this way either. Rather, it would seem to us to refer broadly to *any sort of authority whatsoever*, so that a woman is prohibited – within the church – from exercising any sort of authority over a man.

Conclusion

Brothers, we thank you for being willing to dialogue with us further about a sensitive matter. We have offered you a lengthy letter with questions and points to ponder. We hope and pray that this letter will not come across in a negative or condemning manner but rather as we intend it: as a positive way to discuss an outstanding issue of significant concern to both our churches in order to move towards formal ecclesiastical fellowship. Our desire is that in time we may come to a better understanding of one another's position and grow closer together in rightly discerning the Word of God also on the topic of the office of deacon. May God bless us both toward that end.

Yours in the Lord,

H. van Delden (corresponding clerk for Subcommittee West)

Appendix 2 – RPCNA Letter of Response re: Women Deacons

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
Interchurch Committee
c/o Bruce Parnell, committee chairman

March 2015

Canadian Reformed Churches
Committee for Contact with North America – Subcommittee West
c/o Henry van Delden (corresponding clerk)

Dear Brothers,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It was good to have a conversation with you during the meeting of NAPARC Interchurch Committees in Grimsby, ON this past November. We are encouraged by our common commitment to the reformation principles of salvation and church polity; notwithstanding the distinction between the federation of churches maintained by Dutch Reformed folk and the confessional bonds of Scotch-Irish Presbyterian folk. It is with respect to the grace filled questions and pursuant conversation concerning women in the office of deacon that we offer this study with the prayer that God will be honored by it as we proceed into formal ecclesiastical fellowship.

Questions You Raised

Your committee's letter of response dated January 28, 2014 asks two questions primarily. First, you asked: *Would you be able to enlighten us on the historical origin of female deacons within the RPCNA?* This question essentially comes from your Synod Carman's charge "to inquire specifically about how the RPCNA views 'the root of the office of deacon and the authority of such an office in light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions'."

Second, you asked, with respect to a statement in the Adopted Report of Synod 2001 which cites 1 Timothy 3:11 as the "clearest and most decisive text for the question of women deacons": *Is this not over-stated?*

Origin of Deacons

You recognized that the RPCNA does not agree with Calvin's understanding of 1 Timothy 5:9-10 "that Paul was referring to a special order of widows who would function as a second office of deacons."²⁶ Furthermore, you are correct in noting that we do not describe categorically that the origin of the office of deacon is primarily to be found in Acts 6.²⁷ Perhaps Dr. Spear's recently published, *Covenanted Uniformity in Religion*, sheds some light on this matter. The section on *Deacons* in the chapter, "The Church and Its Officers," indicates there was debate as to just how Acts 6 informs the reader concerning deacons. There were two minority points of view expressed in the Westminster Assembly. Some understood "while Acts 6 spoke of church

²⁶ January 28, 2014 letter from Canadian Reformed Churches Committee for Contact with Churches in North America, p. 5; citing Adopted Report of Synod 2001, p. 3.

²⁷ Letter, p. 6.

officers called deacons . . . the situation at the time was extraordinary, and deacons were not ordinary officers of the church."²⁸ The second minority view maintained "the seven men . . . did not serve as officers . . . but were essentially assistants to the apostles."²⁹ Due to the debate over the minority's points, a committee formulated two statements reported on December 19, 1643:

1. The office of a deacon is perpetual in the church. I Tim. iii. 8, Rom. xii. 8. 2. It hath been debated in the committee whether it pertain to the office of deacon to assist the minister in preaching of the word, and administration of the sacraments; but it was not determined upon, but referred to the judgment of the Assembly.³⁰

Because in the years the Westminster Assembly met, it was the responsibility of the civil magistrate to care for the poor, some delegates viewed the diaconal work mentioned in Acts 6 as only temporary until the magistrate took seriously their responsibility for the poor. This position was rejected, perhaps because of the Scottish delegate, George Gillespie, who is recorded as arguing, "The magistrates looks to them [the poor] not as the distressed members of Christ. Human charity and christian charity [are] very different."³¹ Therefore, Acts 6:1-4 was added to the list of verses offered as biblical warrant for the permanence of the deacon's office.

That the essential work of the deacon was debated indicates the presence of Anglican delegates who understood the office of deacon as a stepping stone to the priesthood. Gillespie, borrowing from Peter Lombard, maintained in a passing remark in his *Assertion*, "that there are two sacred offices that are perpetual in the church, deacons and elders. He contrasted the two orders: 'the administration of deacons is exercised about things bodily; the administration of elders about things spiritual. The former about goods; the latter about the government of the church'."³² Gillespie's *two office* position is the position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA).³³ Here is the statement adopted by the Westminster Divines:

The scripture doth hold out deacons as distinct officers in the church. Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8. Whose office is perpetual. Acts 6:1-4 To whose office it belongs not to preach the word, or administer the sacraments, but to take special care in distributing to the necessities of the poor.³⁴

You already noted in your most recent communication to us that the Assembly voted by one in favor of having women deacons. Of course, it is unclear exactly what that vote meant, nevertheless, it demonstrates the lack of clarity with respect to just what the Bible teaches on the

²⁸ Wayne R. Spear, *Covenanted Uniformity in Religion The Influence of the Scottish Commissioners on the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013) 116.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 116.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 117.

³¹ *Ibid*, 117.

³² *Ibid*, 123.

³³ *The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, The Directory for Church Government, "The Officers of the Church," Chapter 3, p. D-8.

³⁴ Spear, 116.

matter of women serving as deacons. Spear's discussion of this indicates the vote concerned the question of the special office of deaconess as developed by Calvin.³⁵

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America adopted the position of the Westminster Assembly as set forth in the *Form of Church Government* concerning deacons; i.e. the office is perpetual, given to mercy matters, and for men only. It was not until 1887 that a congregation within the RPCNA called a woman to serve as a deacon alongside men.³⁶ The author of the first article written given to the discussion of the congregation's election of a woman deacon, Rev. D. S. Faris writes at the outset, "I do not, at present, ask leave to have a hearing, in the REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN AND COVENANTER, on the question of female deacons because the decision of Synod was certainly wrong."³⁷ Curiously enough, at the close of the article Faris writes, "Now, I do not affirm that the Synod is certainly wrong, but I do charge the majority with undue haste in rushing to a decision which is an innovation upon our customs and constitution as received from the Church of Scotland; and upon mature reflection, feel bound to add the additional reason of dissent, that the Synod, by not overturing the matter, has violated the rights of the sessions of the people."³⁸

What was it that moved Rev. Faris to remove the statement, "the decision of Synod was certainly wrong"? In the body of the article, Faris writes, "The only scholarly and effective argument in the case was that of Dr. Stevenson. The argument consisted, first of a construction of certain passages of the New Testament, and second, of an argument based on allusions to the matter in the early fathers."³⁹ Apparently, Synod did not wish to discuss "allusions to the matter in the early fathers" because unless a scriptural defense of the practice could be demonstrated, it did not matter what early fathers taught on the issue. The Bible is recognized as the only infallible rule for faith and life. It was admitted "that direct Scriptural proof was wanting; but there are important things that are and must be taken for granted."⁴⁰ While mistakenly, Stevenson argued there is no proof of women participating in the sacraments of baptism [he forgot Acts 16:15] and the Lord's Supper [he is accurate]; nevertheless it is commonly accepted that women partake of the sacraments. He points out that women are found doing the work which belongs to the office of deacon, therefore, they must have been ordained to that office. Stevenson cited the modern translations of 1 Timothy 3 where the qualifications for church officers are listed. Verse eleven reads, "*Even must their wives . . .*" in the King James Version, while modern translations read, "*Women in like manner must be grave . . .*"

³⁵ Spear, Op Cite, 120.

³⁶ The matter of a congregation electing a woman deacon was brought to Synod by the Presbytery in which the congregation resided. While I do not have a copy of the 1887 Minutes of Synod, I have copies of the denomination's periodical in which the matter is discussed and warrant for the practice justified. The first article, "The Female Deacon and the Sentimental Overflow of Synod" appears in *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter*, October 1888, Vol. XXVI, No. 10, pp. 357-359, and the other article, "Women and the Deacon's Office" appears in *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter*, November 1888, Vol. XXVI, No. 11, pp. 383-407.

³⁷ Rev. D.S. Faris, "The Female Deacon and the Sentimental Overflow of Synod," *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter*, October 1888, Vol. XXVI, No. 10, p. 357.

³⁸ Faris, p. 359.

³⁹ Faris, p. 357.

⁴⁰ Faris, p. 357.

Faris says Professor Willson “intimated, that from a thorough examination of the matter as a theologian, he had views that correspond to the sentiment of Synod.”⁴¹ Finally, Synod adopted the following statement on the matter: “That we find it agreeable to nature and the word of God that a woman should be ordained to the office of deacon.”⁴²

Certainly, if this is the end of the argument for the justification of women being ordained to the deaconate, we ought to relinquish our present position in favor of the one advocated by nearly all of our fellow Presbyterian and Reformed denominations. It is in the November 1888 issue of the *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* that the work of a small committee to draw up a statement of the grounds on which Synod arrived at the conclusion, “That such ordination is, in our judgment, in harmony with the New Testament, and with the constitution of the apostolic church” is recorded.⁴³

Three points were to be kept in mind in answering the question regarding the women deacons. First, “That the institutions and provisions of the apostolic church *were not all formally introduced at once, but from time to time, as they were found necessary to the comfort and edification of her members.*”⁴⁴ Clearly the commission of the apostles and the requisite gifts were all provided, but only as they were required. The word was preached to the world, both Jews and Gentiles, and congregations were organized with elders (teaching and ruling) and deacons were added to oversee the temporal affairs of the house of God. The yoke of the ceremonial law was removed in due time. “The apostles seem to have followed the guidance of providence, as well as of the Spirit, in giving the church a full organization.”⁴⁵ This was true of the Old Testament laws and provisions as well. One example is the synagogue which developed because it became more and more difficult “to wait on the temple service . . . yet it was sanctioned by priests, prophets, and by our Lord himself.”⁴⁶ Apparently synagogues had deacons who “had charge of the property, opened the doors and conducted strangers to seats, and attended generally to the comfort of the assembly, as well as being almoners and managers of the funds. And the sexes sat apart, separated by a partition of some height, female officers were required for one side of the house, to attend to the comfort of the worshippers and preserve order.”⁴⁷ It may be in light of this strict separation of the sexes that led Paul to admonish the women to keep silent in church and ask questions outside of the worship service. As for the committee’s understanding of Acts 6:1-4, we read

Nor is the supposition by some of our best writers at all unreasonable, that even before the choice of the seven (Acts 6), one side of the great multitude of believers then in Jerusalem (the Hebrew), had, after the example of the synagogue, parties already acting as deacons in taking

⁴¹ Faris, p. 358.

⁴² Faris, p. 358.

⁴³ Small Committee, “Women and the Deacon’s Office,” *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter*, November 1888, Vol. XXVI, No. 11, p. 383.

⁴⁴ Small Committee, p. 384.

⁴⁵ Small Committee, p. 384.

⁴⁶ Small Committee, p. 384.

⁴⁷ Small Committee, p. 385.

care of their poor; while the Hellenists, being comparative strangers, had none, and therefore their poor were neglected. And favoring this idea is the fact that all the seven have been taken from the party that had complained. And this, putting them on equal footing with the Hebrews, perfect harmony was restored. The church as yet, however, was in a very inchoate state, and we cannot, at that early period, expect to find about her institutions all the completeness afterwards sustained. Certain it is, however, that the deacon's office came ultimately to be recognized as a divine and permanent institution in all the churches, and therefore, Paul addresses the church at Philippi as consisting of saints, bishops and deacons.⁴⁸

The second point which must be kept in mind: "That the offices in the New Testament church *are indicated both by official names given to the office-bearers, and also by terms descriptive of their work.*"⁴⁹ New Testament words are used in two senses – the ordinary and the appropriated.

"The terms overseer or bishop, elder, pastor and deacon, are now mostly used as official names for office-bearers in the church; and in which sense, primary or appropriated, any one of these terms is employed in the original of the New Testament, can only be determined by a careful study of the context. In its primary and ordinary signification the term rendered deacon simply means one who renders a service to another, and both it, and verb formed from it, are often used in this sense . . . But in time it has come to be chiefly used as a designation of a church office-bearer, and though as a substantive it is not used of the *seven* (Acts 6), yet as a verb it is employed to express the nature of their work, 'to serve tables' (*diakonein trapezais*).⁵⁰ We find this to be the case when we come across the word pastor, elder or deacon in an epistle, though no one is named specifically, we understand such persons exist in the congregations addressed. Hebrews 13:17 is such an example. Romans 12:6-8 presents us with "the several office-bearers in the church are wholly designated by their work . . . Among these, 'ministry' (*diakonia*), the deacon's work and office, is in its operations doubly described as 'giving with liberality,' and 'showing mercy with cheerfulness.' Therefore, when either the term deacon is used *in connection with the church and her work*, or when the work *proper to the deacon's office* is clearly referred to, it is reasonably certain that a church officer is intended."⁵¹

The third point: "That how far any ordinance or institution is to be enjoyed or exercised by members of the church, *can only be learned by subsequent facts, not from the account of its first institution.*"⁵² It is understood that all members in the church enjoy all the rights and privileges unless otherwise excluded. For instance, women were not circumcised in the Old Testament, therefore, one would expect that women would be excluded from baptism. Throughout the ministry of John and Jesus there is no record of a woman being baptized, one is therefore tempted to think women are not to be baptized. At Jesus' ascension, with the call "to repent and be baptized," no women are recorded as being baptized. It is not until twenty years later that we have the case of the baptism of Lydia and her household (Acts 16:15). When Paul institutes the Lord's Supper he enjoins, "Let a man examine himself . . ." which could be interpreted as

⁴⁸ Small Committee, p. 385.

⁴⁹ Small Committee, p. 385.

⁵⁰ Small Committee, pp. 385-386.

⁵¹ Small Committee, p. 386.

⁵² Small Committee, p. 386.

prohibiting women from the Table. From Acts 1:14, “All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers,” we infer that women were included in Acts 2:42, “And they [men and women] devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayer.” Therefore, women surely enjoyed the Lord’s Supper. Further, we understand there is neither male nor female, but we are all one in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

The small committee demonstrates how these principles apply to the issue of women deacons. Acts 6 shows that the seven deacons were all males, nevertheless this “does not necessarily exclude females from the office, inasmuch as the institutions of the New Testament were, to some extent, adapted to circumstances as they arose.”⁵³ When this is coupled with the second principle, i.e. “if we find both the name and the work, and the qualifications proper to the deacon’s office predicated of women, and *that clearly in church relations*, they must be admissible to that office.”⁵⁴ Finally, because “the privilege of holding and exercising the deacon’s office, *not being in the case of women one of the things excepted*, their right thereto is as plain, and even plainer, than to many other things which we freely accord them.”⁵⁵

Keeping these points/principles in mind we consider Romans 16:1-3 with respect to Phoebe. Clearly she is a member of the church at Cenchrea and she is preparing to visit Rome. Paul commends Phoebe “to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints” (Rom. 1:7) “a servant (διάκονον = deacon/servant) of the church at Cenchrea” (Rom. 16:1). She is not a deaconess because the word in the Greek is the common gender, it does not distinguish gender. The word “deacon” as used in this verse may apply to either men or women. “Now, we hold, that the word deacon is here used of Phoebe, not in its primary or ordinary sense, but in its appropriated sense of a church officer, because *she is spoken of in church relation*. Had it been ‘a servant of God,’ or ‘a servant of the Lord,’ it would have proved nothing as to her holding office, because these expressions are applicable to all who are of the household of faith. But we are not aware that ‘*servant of the church*,’ or any similar expression, is ever used of persons except in official positions.”⁵⁶ This certainly is the case with prophets and teachers at Antioch, and with apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers in Ephesus. Moses was a servant in his house, no doubt referring to his official position in Israel, the Old Testament expression of the church. Paul assures Timothy that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, therefore, for Phoebe to be a deacon of the church of Cenchrea, it follows she was an office-bearer, i.e. the office of deacon. Paul writes of Phoebe, “she has been a patron of many and of me also” (Rom. 16:2). The term translated “patron” (προστάτις) is used of those who go before or over others in any work. “Its (προστάτις) force can be seen in the fact that it is twice used by Paul in describing the qualifications of a bishop (1 Tim. 3:3-4), as ‘one that *ruleth* well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity,’ as every father and head of family should.”⁵⁷ It was not uncommon for Paul to send “messengers of the church” (2 Cor. 8:16-24) to raise money or distribute money. In commending Phoebe as a deacon in a sister church, Paul is not simply speaking of any “servant” of the Lord or himself; she is an official deacon of the church.

⁵³ Small Committee, p. 387.

⁵⁴ Small Committee, p. 387.

⁵⁵ Small Committee, p. 387.

⁵⁶ Small Committee, pp. 387-388.

⁵⁷ Small Committee, p. 388.

Next our attention is turned toward a passage where the qualifications are found for women deacons. Paul writes to Timothy instructions as to how to behave in the house of God:

Paul first instructs him as to how bishops should be qualified, then, in five particulars, the necessary qualifications which deacons should possess, (1 Tim. 3:-10,) and then (v.11) adds, as in the authorized version, “Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.” This would, at first sight, appear as an additional qualification which the deacon should possess, but though usually interpreted, there are no grounds for understanding the passage in that sense, because, first, the character of a man’s wife is never given as a qualification for his holding office in the New Testament church. If it had been so, it would be of special importance in the case of a bishop, and yet in his case nothing of the kind is ever hinted.⁵⁸

Secondly, it is pointed out that the word “their” is not in the Greek text, which means the word translated “wives” (γυναῖκας) is more commonly translated “women” because it ought not to be understood as related to the male deacons whose qualifications are also given. Thirdly, grammatically the whole passage forbids the idea of “wives”. Bishops, deacons and women are linked together by the use of ὡσαύτως “likewise” in verses eight and eleven of First Timothy chapter three.

As Alford remarks, “γυναῖκας here, marked off by *hosautos*, must be an ecclesiastical class, and can hardly be other than deaconesses, *ministrae*, as Pliny calls them in his letter to Trajan, such as Phoebe was at Cenchrea.”⁵⁹

Another reason why γυναῖκας is not “wives” is seen in the fact that domestic duties are not listed as qualifications in verse 11 for females, as they are in verse 12 for males – the husband of one wife and managing their children and household well. Furthermore, in verses 8-10 qualifications for deacons are cited, then in verse 11 qualifications for females are cited and in verse 12 for males who are married are cited. It is worth noting that the four qualifications listed for females – *dignified, not slanderers, sober-minded, faithful in all things* – parallel those listed in verses 8-10 – *dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain, hold fast the mystery of the faith*.

It only follows that such women who are qualified to be called as deacons in the church of God, they would be ordained just as those men who are qualified to be called as deacons in the church of God. Once a person, male or female, is duly elected and found qualified to the office of deacon in the church, their ordination merely sets those persons apart and officially declares them an office-bearer in the church. “To a deacon elect, duly qualified and approved, belongs the right of ordination. But a woman may be a deacon elect, duly qualified and approved. Therefore, to a woman duly elected to deacon’s office, and qualified and approved, belongs the right of ordination.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Small Committee, p. 389.

⁵⁹ Small Committee, p. 390.

⁶⁰ Small Committee, p. 392.

While there may be many practical advantages which may be cited for having women deacons, pragmatics is not the basis of the argument, it is a derivative of the propriety of having female deacons. Hence, the sum of the argument is stated in the following quote:

The principle is plain. To a woman belong all corporate rights in the church *unless specifically excepted*, as is the case as regards the ministry and eldership, whilst it cannot be shown that the deaconship is excepted but the contrary is established. In fact her rights here are fuller and plainer than her right to the Lorde's table.⁶¹

**1 Timothy 3:8-12 the “clearest and most decisive text for the question of women deacons”:
*Is this not over-stated?***

You muse at the statement offered that 1 Timothy 3:8-12 is “the clearest and most decisive text for the question of women deacons,” therefore we must answer that query “Is this not over-stated?” which you raise. Presumably, the fact that Acts 6:1-4 calls attention only to “seven men, full of the Spirit” being set apart to “serve tables” makes this passage the “clearest and most decisive text for the question of women deacons.” However, this mitigates against the clear teaching of the New Testament that order in the visible body of Christ (the church) underwent progress in its development. We agree that with the death of the Apostles and the close of the canon, biblical Apostles ceased to exist. Certainly the progression was from Apostles to elders, ruling and preaching/teaching (1 Tim. 5:17), or shepherding and teaching (Eph. 4:11) and to deacons as the temporal needs of the visible church grew beyond the ability of the elders to manage. Paul writes Timothy a letter which, among other things, is to instruct the people of God associated with him “how one ought to behave in the household of God” (1 Tim. 3:15). Paul writes in chapter two how men are to pray (interestingly, with holy hands lifted) (v. 8) and how women (here γυναῖκι is not translated “wife” but “women” and rightly so) are to refrain from teaching and exercising authority over a man. As Paul moves to the establishment of offices within the household of God, he begins with the office of overseer/bishop/elder as we would expect. Without elders there is no visible church according to Presbyterian and Reformed polity. It is in the qualifications for the eldership that we find the outworking of Paul's words in 2:12 prohibiting women (not wives) from exercising authority over men or teaching in the church. Paul then turns to the qualifications for deacons (servers). Just as there are qualities those who desire the office of overseer must manifest, “likewise” deacons manifest specific qualities so congregants will know those who are suited to be called to serve in the office of deacon. In verses 8-10 general qualifications are cited, then in verse 11 Paul writes “Γυναῖκας ὡσαύτως – women likewise (“their” is not in the Greek text, thus mitigating against understanding Γυναῖκας to mean “wives,” as well as when viewed in light of 1 Tim. 2:15's use of Γυναῖκας) and presents a list of qualifications which almost mirror those found in verses 8-10 (observe the absence of specifically “domestic/wifely/motherly” qualities). He moves forward in verse 12 to speak of qualifications specific to male deacons as noticed by his reference to the male being a “one woman man.” Polygamy was an issue in Paul's day, therefore, both for elders and deacons, men must have only one wife.

⁶¹ Small Committee, p. 399.

Where else does Paul present us with the qualifications for the two offices the church enjoys today than in 1 Timothy 3:1-13? When Paul instructs Titus, “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you” he is only concerned to list the qualifications for elders because deacons are not necessary for the organization of congregations. Hence, it is in the fuller passage of Paul’s words to Timothy enjoining him how we are to live in the household of God that we find the “clearest and most decisive text for the question of women deacons.”

We look forward to your careful consideration of this reply and any questions this may raise as we maintain our conversation relative to this matter.

Appendix 3 – Follow-up Letter to the RPCNA re: Women Deacons

Canadian Reformed Churches
Committee for Contact with North America – Subcommittee West
c/o Henry van Delden (corresponding clerk)

May 9, 2015

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
Interchurch Relations Committee
c/o Bruce Parnell, committee chairman

Dear Brothers,

Our subcommittee is beginning to work through your Interchurch Relations Committee's response (dated March, 2015) to our letter (dated January 28, 2014) so that we can "evaluate the way in which the RPCNA understands ordination, the root of the office of deacon and the authority of such an office in light of Scripture and the Reformed Confessions". It will take our committee some time to work through your reply so we are grateful that you did not request a timeline to reply.

We have noticed, with gratitude, that your letter addressed two of our main questions. At the same time we observe that one other main topic about which we posed some questions went unanswered, namely the subject of the authority of the office of deacon (see our original letter, p.7,8). We realize that we put a tight timeline on our request for a reply but our only reason for doing so was because our synod only meets every three years. Because this topic was specifically mentioned in our synod-given mandate we would appreciate a reply, as yet, to these questions if at all possible. If it is not possible, would you send us a brief note to indicate this?

Our committee will make an evaluation on the response received to date, and possibly forthcoming, and prepare a report for our upcoming General Synod next spring. We appreciate this dialogue with the goal that there be ecclesiastical fellowship between the RPCNA and the CanRef federation of churches. At this time we also wish your upcoming General Synod much wisdom as it serves our Lord and His Church.

With brotherly regards
Henry van Delden, corresponding clerk

Appendix 4 – RPCNA Response to Follow-up Letter

[Received May 29, 2015]

Dear Brothers in the Canadian Reformed Churches,

You ask in your letter of May 9, 2015 about your earlier question regarding 1 Timothy 2:12. (March 2014 p. 7-8) We recognize that you are preparing for your Synod meeting so offer this brief response in clarification.

While our response didn't single out 1 Timothy 2:12, it does address the passage on the bottom of page 8.

It is in the qualifications for the eldership that we find the outworking of Paul's words in 2:12 prohibiting women (not wives) from exercising authority over men or teaching in the church. Paul then turns to the qualifications for deacons (servers).

By way of clarification and in answer to your second question (“...does Paul speak only here of a ruling or teaching authority? If so, how is that indicated?”) - In 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul links "authority" and "teaching" in the church as a male only responsibility. It is the office of elder which bears the weight of "authority" and "teaching" and carries the qualifications of "male only". The office of deacon is the office of "service". In an earlier communication/paper, we sought to show the deaconate is not an office of "authority" as the office of elder is. When one "serves" one generally is not exercising "authority" as an elder would. Certainly when a deacon directs a congregant to the Word of God in order to help with a material matter when giving a "cup of cold water" (showing mercy), the Word of God is the "authority". If the congregant does not heed the direction offered by the deacon, it is the elder who enters the situation with "authority" and "teaching".

The provides the basis, then, to answer to your first question, “Instead, the RPCNA is clear that women may exercise a certain form of authority over men in the church, namely administrative authority. Have we understood this correctly and, if so, is there a way to clear up this inconsistency?”) – Yes. Women may exercise administrative/serving authority. See the paragraph above regarding 1 Timothy 2:12 referring to the teaching/ruling authority.

We hope this serves to further our dialogue and mutual edification.

In Christ,

Bruce Parnell, ch.
Interchurch Committee

Appendix 5 – Is the Testimony a Reformed Confession? An Investigative Report

Note: In this following report, CCCNA-West has systematically worked through the WCF and the Testimony. We provide some notes on how the Testimony adds to, explains, and applies the WCF for the church today. Our goal is to determine whether the Testimony is a faithful Reformed Confession.

Introduction (of the Testimony)

While the WCF begins by dealing with Scripture, the Testimony adds an extensive introduction to the document. It is focused on the covenant. The RPCNA is very much a covenantal church. The introduction to the Testimony states, “The covenant concept lies at the heart of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.” (Testimony, *Introduction*, 1). The introduction goes on to explain how the covenant relation began with Adam, how he broke the covenant, and how “the remainder of Scripture is the gradual unfolding of the Covenant of Grace through a series of covenants...” (Testimony, *Introduction*, 4). It explains how Christ came to serve as Mediator of the covenant, and how all men are called to repentance and obedience.

In the *Introduction*, section 9, the Testimony states:

The Westminster Confession of Faith is one of the historic creeds of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America believes that this Confession is based on, and subordinate to, Scripture. The truth it presents is of inestimable value for contemporary society.”

Section 10 describes the relationship between the WCF and the Testimony:

However, changes in the application of truth are needed because of changing situations in each generation. Some current topics of vital importance for the Christian Church were unknown in the 17th century. Therefore, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America presents its Testimony applying Scripture truth to the contemporary situation. This Testimony is placed in a column parallel to that which contains the Confession.

Section 12 explains the authority of the RPCNA’s confessions:

All of these documents, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, are of equal authority in the church; except that where noted, earlier documents are to be interpreted by the later ones.

This point is noteworthy. There are points where the Testimony disagrees with the WCF. In such cases, the Testimony, being written later, should be used to interpret the WCF.

Conclusion: The *Introduction* to the Testimony is useful as it shows that the RPCNA has a covenantal view on Scripture. It also helps to explain that the confessions are subordinate to Scripture, and that earlier confessions are to be interpreted by later ones. All that is presented here is faithful to Scripture.

Ch.1 Of the Holy Scripture

The RPCNA confesses the same thing we confess in the Belgic Confession (BC) Art.2, that God reveals himself through natural or general revelation (creation) and through special revelation

(Word). It explains that these two forms of revelation are complementary, and emphasizes the need for Scripture since it is “the final word of God to man for faith and life” (Ch.1.4).

Throughout the Testimony the RPCNA makes a series of clarifying statements in which they reject various errors being propagated about the doctrines of the church. It is helpful for us to pass on some of the most notable rejection of errors:

- “We reject any view of Scripture that denies the objective truth of the Bible by making the authority of its message dependent on the circumstances or the subjective experience of the reader.” (Ch.1.6).
- “We reject the view that the Bible sets forth truth in the form of myth.” (Ch.1.12).
- “We reject the view that the Holy Spirit gives personal revelations or that He leads men apart from the general principles of the Word or contrary to its teachings.” (Ch.1.14).
- “We reject the concept that there is continuing revelation of God in the actions, decisions or decrees of the Church.” (Ch.1, 15).

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful, clear and helpful understanding of the RPCNA’s high view of Scripture and its authority.

Ch.2 Of God, and of the Holy Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is explained well. The person and work of the Holy Spirit receive special attention in the Testimony. The Testimony distinguishes between the general work of the Holy Spirit manifesting “the grace of God toward all His creatures” and the special work of the Holy Spirit in applying to the elect the redeeming benefits of Christ’s atonement (Ch.2.7-8).

To explain the general work of the Holy Spirit manifesting the grace of God to all his creatures, it is worth quoting from the Testimony. It says:

The Holy Spirit, as the giver of life, is everywhere present and makes manifest the grace of God toward all His creatures. He supplies man’s powers of reason and conscience, restrains His disposition toward evil, and preserves a degree of justice and morality in society. His common work for all mankind does not regenerate but leaves those who reject God without excuse (Ch.2.7).

The Testimony also states, “We reject the teaching that inner light, dreams, visions or charismatic gifts provide a new, more advanced or infallible revelation of God” (Ch.2.10).

The Testimony provides a very sound explanation of the sin against the Holy Spirit:

The sin against the Holy Spirit which will not be forgiven, commonly called the unpardonable sin, is the final— secret or open—rejection of His testimony concerning Jesus Christ. It is a sin unto death, because it is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and because, by its very nature, it is the willful and persistent rejection of the only hope of forgiveness through the Savior. On the other hand, the fear of having committed this sin, together with an earnest desire for fellowship with God in Christ, give evidence that this sin has not been committed (chp.2.11).

The Testimony states, “We reject the teaching that particular charismatic gifts such as those of tongues and of healing are normal or necessary signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit” (chp.2.15).

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a sound explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity and further elucidates the person and work of the Holy Spirit in a scriptural manner.

Ch.3 Of God’s Eternal Decree

The comments that the Testimony makes regarding God’s eternal decrees clarify some rather obscure language in the WCF.

Conclusion: The Testimony is in accord with the revealed word of God.

Ch.4 Of Creation

The WCF specifies that God created the world in the space of six days. The Testimony states that “The account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 is history, not mythology.” (Ch.4.1). The Testimony opposes the theory of evolution in ch.4.3: “The theory of evolution which assumes that chance happenings are an explanation of the origin and development of matter and living things is unscriptural.” It adds in the next section, “We deny that man evolved from any lower form of life.”

The Testimony upholds the need for man to be a good steward of God’s creation. It says, “Man is steward of the creation and should treat his resources of material wealth, environment, health, energy and talents as gifts of God, for which he must give account” (Ch.4.8). The Testimony has a section titled “Economics” which teaches that everything belongs to God, and that men are to seek God’s glory in the use of their goods. It states:

The Scriptures require the Christian to exercise stewardship over his possessions. In view of that requirement, he should contribute gladly to the Lord’s work and give generously to the poor and needy. Under the old covenant the Lord required the practice of tithing. Recognizing the greater blessings under the new covenant and the fact that Christ endorsed tithing, the Christian should respond out of love by giving at least as great a proportion of his income to the Lord’s work through the Church” (Ch.4.15).

Conclusion: The Testimony faithfully summarizes Scripture in taking a strong position against evolution and providing godly principles for Christian stewardship.

Ch.5 Of Providence

The Testimony applies the Confession’s teaching on God’s providence by explaining how it “should lead the believer to be patient in adversity and thankful in prosperity, resting confidently on the Lord” (Ch.5.1). It details how gambling is a sin and warns against a wide variety of different forms of gambling (Ch.5.4). It explains how, “Satan has power in this world which includes predictions of the future, signs and wonders that deceive, and possession of persons.” It warns that “Christians are to flee the workings of Satan in such things as fortune telling, horoscopes, astrology, palmistry, witchcraft, conjurings, séances, drug experiences, and Satan worship” (Ch.5.5).

Conclusion: The Testimony faithfully elucidates God’s providence by warning against gambling and the occult.

Ch.6 Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof

The Testimony clarifies the WCF’s position by further explaining that the corruption of man’s nature is called “total depravity.”

Conclusion: The Testimony is in harmony with the revealed word of God.

Ch.7 Of God’s Covenant with Man

The WCF makes a distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. In connection with this, the Testimony explains that,

The Covenant of Works has not been revoked. All men remain under its requirement of perfect obedience and will have to give account according to it at the last judgment. In the Covenant of Grace Jesus Christ has fulfilled the requirements of the Covenant of Works for His people...” (Ch.7.3).

The WCF explains that the shadows of the old covenant were fulfilled when the gospel came. In connection with this, the Testimony states, “We reject the teaching that God will reinstate the temple and its rites and ceremonies” (Ch.7.6).

Conclusion: The Testimony faithfully represents Scripture’s teaching about God’s covenant with man.

Ch.8 Of Christ the Mediator

The Testimony clarifies that while Christ’s atoning work was sufficient to save the whole world, it is only applied to the elect (the doctrine of limited atonement) (Ch.8.7). The Testimony also makes it clear that because of their connection with God’s elect, the reprobate are partakers of some benefits which flow forth from Christ’s death. These include the fact that some divine judgments are sometimes averted for the sake of the saints, and that benevolence and temperance are promoted by the Church’s teaching and influence (Ch.8.8).

Conclusion: The Testimony provides some further clarification on the atoning work of Christ our Mediator and the benefits that flow forth from him.

Ch.9 Of Free Will

The Testimony states, “We reject the teaching that the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is dependent upon the exercise of man’s free will.”

Conclusion: The Testimony provides some further clarification in harmony with Scripture.

Ch.10 Of Effectual Calling

The Testimony makes it clear that “There is no inconsistency between the biblical doctrine of particular redemption and the command to offer the Gospel to all men” (Chp.10.2). It goes on to outline the Church’s task in evangelism and mission.

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful summary of Scripture's teaching on limited atonement and the calling to spread the gospel indiscriminately.

Ch.11 Of Justification

The Testimony provides a clear definition of justification, explaining that it "is a legal declaration that the sinner is acquitted from the guilt of sin, and is considered righteous before God" (Ch.11.1). It states that, "Faith in Christ is the only means of justification," (Ch.11.2) and declares, "We reject the teaching that man's works have a part in his justification" (Ch.11.3). It explains that "The justification of the believer does not diminish his obligation to obey divine law" (Ch.11.4).

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful summary of Scripture's doctrine of justification.

Ch.12 Of Adoption

The Testimony states that justification and adoption are both performed once, and not repeated (Ch.12.2). The Testimony clears up possible misunderstandings about the universal fatherhood of God, stating that "to the redeemed alone belongs the right to be called sons of God" (Ch.12.4).

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful summary of Scripture's teaching of adoption.

Ch.13 Of Sanctification

Conclusion: The Testimony makes a clear and helpful distinction between justification and sanctification which is faithful to Scripture.

Ch.14 Of Saving Faith

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a beautiful and biblically faithful summary of what we believe about saving faith.

Ch.15 Of Repentance Unto Life

Conclusion: The Testimony gives a rich and scripturally sound summary of repentance and how this leads to eternal life.

Ch.16 Of Good Works

Conclusion: The Testimony gives a faithful and clear explanation of how we are to view the "good works" of unregenerate men.

Ch.17 Of the Perseverance of the Saints

Conclusion: In faithfulness to the Bible, the Testimony makes a clear distinction between true believers who cannot fall away from the faith, and those who have the outward appearance of being regenerate and who do fall away.

Ch.18 Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a beautiful and biblical summary of this doctrine.

Ch.19 Of the Law of God

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful summary of this doctrine.

Ch.20 Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience

Conclusion: The Testimony accurately summarizes Scripture's teaching on Christian liberty and about what our conscience is and how it should function.

Ch.21 Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

The Testimony opposes the use of pictures or images of Jesus in worship or as aids to devotion. (Ch.21.3). The Testimony requires the singing of God's praise in public worship. It promotes the singing of Psalms exclusively, explaining the "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" referred to in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 as being a reference to the Psalms (Ch.21.5). The Testimony also opposes singing with the accompaniment of instruments, arguing that these are not part of the New Testament pattern of worship (Ch.21.6).

The Testimony makes provision for religious fasting as an ordinance of God and prescribes how it should take place (Ch.21.7). The Testimony indicates that heads of families are responsible for leadership in family worship (Ch.21. 9). The Testimony specifies that "worship in small groups is also encouraged by the Scripture" (Ch.21.10).

Conclusion: The Testimony promotes exclusive psalmody, forbids the accompaniment of musical instruments in worship, and makes provision for religious fasting, all things we are not accustomed to in our churches. While these teachings are not found in the Three Forms of Unity, they also do not contradict any teaching found therein. Our confessions do not prescribe such particular points. Certainly, as CanRC we would not agree with the exegetical basis or theological underpinnings for these practices. Yet it is important to note what our Church Order says in Article 50 about Churches Abroad. It notes, "On minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice, churches abroad shall not be rejected." The Free Church of Scotland also practices exclusive psalmody and forbid the accompaniment of musical instruments in worship but this has not prevented the CanRC from entering into ecclesiastical fellowship with them. As Committee, our conclusion is that such matters are indeed minor, take nothing away from the marks of the true church which are evident in the RPCNA, and present no obstacle from entering into ecclesiastical fellowship.

Ch.22 Of Lawful Oaths and Vows

In explaining how lawful oaths and vows are to be made, the Testimony introduces the idea of "covenanting." It indicates that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the uses in Scripture of the words "vow" and "covenant." It defines a covenant we make with God as "a corporate act of pledging obedience to what God has commanded in His covenant." (Ch.22.6). The Testimony says:

God's covenants require obedience of all men whether they acknowledge their obligation or not. God's people, individually and corporately, respond to His covenants by solemnly promising to be the Lord's and to keep His commandments... [T]he sacraments of the New Testament are ordinances for entrance into and renewal of covenant union with God" (Ch.22.8).

It continues:

Covenanting in the New Testament takes the form of confessing Christ and His Lordship. In view of the continued emphasis of the covenantal relationship of God to men in the New Testament, it is appropriate for churches and nations to covenant to be the Lord's and to serve Him. The statements

or documents produced in these acts of covenant response are dependent upon the Covenant of Grace. They are statements of responsibility arising from the application of the Word of God to the times in which they are made. Such covenants have continuing validity in so far as they give true expression to the Word of God for the times and situations in which believers live.” (Ch.22.9).

Conclusion: We struggle with the idea of the New Testament church corporately “covenanting” with God as church. What does this mean? We question whether it is right for a nation “to covenant to be the Lord’s and to serve him.” The nations of this world are made up of believers and unbelievers. How can a nation make a covenant to serve the Lord when many of its citizens don’t know him or serve him? The proof texts for this idea of “covenanting” do not appear to support the concept being promoted in the Testimony. At the same time, this teaching does not contradict anything in the Three Forms of Unity and appears to be a doctrine derived from scriptural exegesis, however unconvincing we may find it to be. As such, it does not detract from the marks of the true church which are evident in the RPCNA. As committee, we would recommend that the Canadian Reformed Churches note their difficulty with chapter 22 of the Testimony.

Ch.23 Of the Civil Magistrate

Chapter 23 of the Testimony speaks to the RPCNA’s practice of “covenanting.” They believe that it is the responsibility of every nation “to enter into covenant with Christ and serve to advance His Kingdom on earth” (Ch.23.4). As committee, we question the biblical basis for this. In the old covenant God established a relationship with Israel, his covenant people. In the new covenant, God’s establishes a covenant with believers and their children. We don’t see biblical warrant for nations (made up of believers and unbelievers) to covenant with God.

The Testimony goes on to say, “We reject the view that nations have no corporate responsibility for acknowledging and obeying Christ” (Ch.23.5). We question the Biblical basis for stating that a nation has a corporate responsibility for acknowledging and obeying Christ.

The Testimony makes it clear that the RPCNA does not subscribe to what the WCF teaches about the civil government’s involvement in spiritual matters in the church (Ch.23.18). The Testimony distinguishes between the differing spheres of authority between church and state. It says,

Both the government of the nation and the government of the visible church are established by God. Though distinct and independent of each other, they both owe supreme allegiance to Jesus Christ. The governments of church and state differ in sphere of authority in that due submission to the government of the visible church is the obligation of members thereof, while due submission to civil government is the obligation of all men. The governments of church and state also have different functions and prerogatives in the advancement of the Kingdom of God. The means of enforcement of the civil government are physical, while those of church government are not. Neither government has the right to invade or assume the authority of the other. They should cooperate to the honor and glory of God, while maintaining their separate jurisdictions (Ch.23.19).

The Testimony states, “Both the Christian and the Church have a responsibility for witnessing against national sins and for promoting justice” (Ch.23, 22). We agree that this is the Christian’s task, but do not see Scriptural warrant for making this the church’s responsibility.

The Testimony goes on to say, “It is the duty of the Christian Church to testify to the authority of Christ over the nations, against all anti-Christian, atheistic, and secular principles of civil government, and against all sinful oaths of allegiance to civil governments...” (Ch.23.28). We question the delineation of responsibility between a Christian, and the Christian church. The Church’s task is a spiritual one. The Testimony itself makes this point beautifully in Ch.25, section 2. It states,

It is the mission of the Church to preserve, maintain and proclaim to the whole world the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the whole counsel of God; to gather into her fellowship those of every race and people who accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and promise obedience to Him; to build them up in their most holy faith, and train them to be faithful witnesses for Christ in all his offices; to maintain the ordinances of divine worship in their purity; witness against all evil; and in every way to seek the advancement of the Kingdom of God on earth.

We would say that while individual Christians have a mandate to be involved in society and in politics, we do not see scriptural warrant for the church’s task in politics. The Testimony states,

When participating in political elections, the Christian should support and vote only for such men as are publicly committed to scriptural principles of civil government. Should the Christian seek civil office by political election, he must openly inform those whose support he seeks of his adherence to Christian principles of civil government” (Ch.23.29).

This can make it impossible for a Christian to vote in a political election, especially if no fellow Christian is running for office.

Conclusion: The practice of “covenanting” is problematic, especially in the civil realm. There is no clear delineation between the task of a Christian and that of the church in politics. The scriptural warrant for these matters is not convincing. At the same time, this teaching does not contradict anything in the Three Forms of Unity and appears to be a doctrine derived from scriptural exegesis, however unconvincing we may find it to be. As such, it does not detract from the marks of the true church which are evident in the RPCNA. As committee, we would recommend that the Canadian Reformed Churches note their difficulty with chapter 23 of the Testimony

Ch.24 Of Marriage and Divorce

The Testimony gives much useful instruction about marriage and family life. It supports the Scriptural teaching that a husband is to be head of his wife and that the wife is to be the helper of her husband, and outlines each of their responsibilities in marriage. The Testimony teaches, “Unborn children are living creatures in the image of God” (Ch.24.19). It opposes deliberately induced abortions, except possibly to save the mother’s life. The Testimony opposes part of the WCF’s teaching about consanguinity (Ch.24.21). It makes it clear that Scripture permits marriage to a deceased wife’s sister or a deceased husband’s brother (Ch.24.22).

Regarding divorce, the Testimony states:

Before seeking divorce, it is the responsibility of the innocent party to attempt reconciliation with the guilty party in the same manner as in any case of sin, first by his or her own appeal, and then, if need be, by calling on the elders of the church” (Ch.24.23).

While we may consider this to be wise counsel, the question needs to be asked whether the innocent party must seek reconciliation. This seems contrary to the WCF’s statement that, “In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce; and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.” The WCF’s position on whether the innocent party may divorce his or her partner in the case of adultery is clearly supported from Scripture. Additionally, the Testimony says, “In any marriage threatened with dissolution, or even if divorce has occurred, both parties ought to strive for reconciliation on the basis of repentance for sin and willingness to forgive.” (Ch.24.24). While this is something to encourage and strive for, again the question needs to be asked if God truly demands the reconciliation of a marriage after adultery has occurred.

The Testimony has a separate section on Christian education (Ch.24.29-34). It states:

Where necessary and possible, Christian parents should cooperate in supporting or establishing schools whose curriculum presents a biblical world and life view, and place their children in them. This requires maintenance of the highest academic quality along with Christian orientation in every subject and activity” (Ch.24.32).

As committee we can only wholeheartedly agree.

Conclusion: While as committee and as churches we may not agree on the absolute biblical necessity of the innocent marriage partner to seek reconciliation, we can certainly encourage such a move. Other parts of this chapter dealing with Christian education are commendable.

Ch.25 Of the Church

The Testimony states,

The permanent officers to be set apart by ordination are elders and deacons. The office of elder is restricted in Scripture to men. Women as well as men may hold the office of deacon. Ordination is a solemn setting apart to a specific office by the laying on of the hands of a court of the Church and is not to be repeated. Installation is the official constitution of a relationship between one who is ordained and the congregation” (Ch.25.8).

From this it is clear that the RPCNA do not have term limits for their office-bearers, they are ordained for life. An installation is possible, perhaps in the situation where an office-bearer moves to a different congregation.

The Testimony notes that the RPCNA practices a Presbyterian form of church government. It says,

The elders are organized in courts (the session, the presbytery and the Synod) to which is committed the power of governing the church and of ordaining officers. This power is moral and spiritual, and subject to the law of God” (Ch.25.10).

The Testimony indicates the responsibility of deacons. It says,

The diaconate is a spiritual office subordinate to the session and is not a teaching or ruling office. The deacons have responsibility for the ministry of mercy, the finances and property of the congregation, and such other tasks as are assigned to them by the session” (Ch.25.11).

It is important to note that deacons have a different role in the RPCNA than they do in our churches. See Section 5 in the main body of this report for a fuller comparison and analysis of this matter.

The Testimony speaks against denominationalism. It states,

Divisions that separate believers into denominations mar the unity of the Church and are due to error and sin. It is the duty of all denominations which are true churches of Christ to seek reconciliation and union. Such organizational unity, however, should be sought only on the basis of truth and of scriptural order. It is the duty of every believer to unite with the branch of the visible church which adheres most closely to the Scriptures” (Ch.25.14).

The Testimony also speaks about how the Christian should avoid involvement in oath-bound societies. It says,

Christians should walk in the light. Their beliefs, purposes, manner of life, and their rules of action and conduct should be based on the Word of God and should not be concealed. Oath-bound societies usually involve an improper requirement of secrecy, aims which are immoral, intimate fellowship with unbelievers or participation in unbiblical worship. Membership in such organizations is inconsistent with a Christian profession, however good their announced purposes may be.” (Ch.25.19).

Conclusion: While we would agree with many of the points raised, we have concerns about the ordination of women to the office of deacon. Our issue is not with the idea of women serving the edification of the church as (unordained) deaconesses, but with the fact that in the RPCNA the sisters are ordained as deacons and thus have an office in the church. This matter is dealt with more extensively elsewhere in this report.

Ch.26 Of the Communion of Saints

We agree with the Testimony’s first three sections which deal with the communion of saints. Sections 4-7 deal with some moral matters, and we do not see a clear connection to the topic “Of the Communion of Saints.”

In section 4, the Testimony states,

For preservation of life and because of respect for our bodies as God’s creation, we are to be careful in the use of drugs. Christians should avoid enslavement to alcohol, tobacco or any habit-forming drug. The Scripture strongly condemns drunkenness as a sin” (Ch.26.4).

We would agree.

In section 5 the Testimony says,

Because drunkenness is so common, and because the intemperate use of alcohol is constantly being promoted by advertising, business practices, and social pressure, Christians must be careful not to conform to the attitudes and the practices of the world with regard to alcoholic beverages. To prevent damage to our neighbor, to provide mutual help in godly living, and to strengthen each other in living a disciplined life it is altogether wise and proper that Christians refrain from the use, sale and manufacture of alcoholic beverages.” (Ch.26.5).

Here the Testimony fails to distinguish between a scripturally warranted use of alcohol, and an abuse of alcohol. Melchizedek, a priest of God Most High served Abram bread and wine (Gen.14:18). Part of God’s blessing on his people as they entered the Promised Land was that he would give them new wine (Deut.7:13). Psalm 104:15 speaks of the LORD’s blessings on his creation, and mentions that he gives wine that gladdens the heart of man. Ecclesiastes 9:7 commands God’s people: “Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart.” At the wedding feast in Cana, Jesus changed water into wine, so that this joyous celebration could continue (Joh.2). Paul commanded Timothy to “stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses” (1 Tim 5:24). While the Scriptures also clearly warn against the abuse of alcohol, its proper use is clearly supported in Scripture. Thus also the manufacture and sale of alcohol cannot be condemned out right. We do not think it would be wrong for a Christian to grow grapes and establish a winery, and sell his wine to others.

In section 6 the Testimony opposes the use of tobacco, and in section 7 it opposes the use of drugs for pleasure or escape from moral responsibility.

Conclusion: The Testimony beautifully summarizes the Scripture’s teaching on the communion of saints. It warns against enslavement to alcohol, tobacco, or any habit-forming drug, and condemns drunkenness as sin. Yet we would disagree that it is scripturally warranted to say that a Christian should refrain from the use, sale, and manufacture of alcoholic beverages. At the same time, this teaching does not contradict anything in the Three Forms of Unity and appears to be a doctrine derived from scriptural exegesis, however unconvincing we may find it to be. As such, it does not detract from the marks of the true church which are evident in the RPCNA. As committee, we would recommend that the Canadian Reformed Churches note their difficulty with these elements of chapter 26 of the Testimony.

Ch.27 Of the sacraments

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful summary of this doctrine.

Ch.28 Of Baptism

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful summary of this doctrine.

Ch.29 Of the Lord’s Supper

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful summary of this doctrine.

Ch.30 Of Church Censures

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful summary of how the church is to exercise discipline.

Ch.31 Of Synods and Councils

The Testimony rejects paragraph 2 of the WCF which allows the civil magistrate to call a synod together. We would agree.

Additionally, the Testimony states, “We reject the systems of church government which center authority in one individual or in a hierarchy of bishops. We further reject the independent congregational system with authority vested in autonomous congregations.” (Ch.31.4). We don’t fully understand the second sentence. Hasn’t Christ invested authority in the local body of elders, giving them the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

The Testimony also says, “It is the responsibility of the Church to declare God’s Word to civil authorities as it applies to their use of the power that has been given them.” (Ch.31.6). We question whether it is the responsibility of the church to declare God’s Word to the civil authorities.

Conclusion: While we have certain questions on this section of the Testimony, none of them rise to the level of calling into question the faithfulness of the Testimony as a Reformed confession.

Ch.32 Of the State of Men After Death, And the Resurrection of the Dead

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a biblical summary of this doctrine. It rejects “soul sleep,” a second chance for salvation after death, purgatory, or reincarnation.

Ch.33 Of the Last Judgment

Conclusion: The Testimony provides a scriptural and beautiful summary of this doctrine.

Appendix 6 – CCCNA letter to Committee of Review re: Revised Constitution and Bylaws

***Committee for Contact With Churches in North America
Of the Canadian Reformed Churches - Subcommittee West***

c/o H. van Delden (corresponding secretary)
536 Rosseau Avenue West
Winnipeg, MB R2C 1X8

NAPARC Committee of Review
c/o Mark Bube

Dear Brothers,

July 12, 2013

We have no excuse for our tardiness in responding to your report. It was reviewed by our committee in February and a letter should have sent, but wasn't. We apologize for our lateness and yet request that the Committee of Review still consider our input if at all possible. It was evident from the report that the Committee of Review was very thorough in its review of NAPARC's constitution and bylaws and we commend the brothers for their diligence. Overall, the result of the review is an improved document; however we do have some differing thoughts on several points, namely:

1. *Re: Constitution IV. Function - point 5:* We do not support the inclusion of the words "activities for young people." We do not favour the singling out of a specific demographic group within our churches for attention and enshrining a role for NAPARC in promoting cooperation among them. Why young people, and not seniors, or the disabled, etc? We consider this a matter that belongs to the jurisdiction of the local church. Further, for NAPARC to promote such cooperation would be difficult from a practical perspective since a NAPARC meeting is normally held once per year and the men involved lead busy lives.
2. *Re: Bylaws I. Meetings of the Council – point 1:* We do not support the inclusion of a "public worship service for the worship of God," as part of the mandate given to the session/consistory of a church in the area where NAPARC is to be convened. This is not germane to the purpose of NAPARC, which is "to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another, and to hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union..." It would transform NAPARC from a discussion body to a worshipping body. Yet not all the NAPARC churches have a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with one another.
3. *Re: Bylaws IV. Items for consideration by the Council point 3 X. Discussion Regarding Progress Towards Organic Union (as proposed by the Interim Committee):* We have a question about what the intent of this agenda item is, and wonder if that could be clarified under a revised title. As it reads this could be understood wrongly, as if NAPARC itself is the means to achieve organic union and as if the intention is for all member churches to be discussing organic union as a collective of churches.

4. *Re: Bylaws IV.* Items for consideration by the Council point 3 XVI Reports on consultations f. Youth Ministries. If point 1 of our concerns mentioned above is upheld, point f. Youth Ministries would need to be dropped from the regular docket of the Council.
5. *Re: Bylaws VI.* Interim Committee 4n: This bylaw speaks about what to do when an officer of the Council is incapacitated, and suggests the appointment of a presbyter of a member church to perform the functions of that office on an interim basis. Our difficulty is with the word “presbyter.” Some of NAPARC’s member churches have lifelong eldership, but some also practice term eldership. Not all those serving on our Inter-church relations committees are presbyters or elders. Thus we would suggest adding to “presbyters” the words “or member of the Inter-church Relations Committee” in this bylaw.
6. *Re: Perceived Tension Between Constitution Articles 4 and 5.2:* Our recent General Synod (held in Carman, MB, May, 2013) also mandated our Committee to raise a point of discussion at NAPARC concerning some of the wording in the Constitution. Because your committee is dealing directly with the possibility of altering the Constitution, we feel it may be best to include that concern in this letter in the hopes that it can be addressed in an appropriate fashion. Allow us to quote the particular mandate we have received:

To mandate the CCCNA to raise in discussion at NAPARC what may be perceived as a tension between Article 4 of the NAPARC Constitution on “The Nature and Extent of Authority,” and the last sentence of 5.2 on “Membership,” namely, “Those churches shall be eligible for membership ... [which] maintain the marks of the true church (pure preaching of the gospel, the Scriptural administration of the sacraments, the faithful exercise of discipline).” (*Acts of Synod Carman 2013*, Article 77, Recommendation 4.3)

As we understand our Synod’s concern, there appears to be a tension between the *actions and decisions* of NAPARC being *advisory* in nature (as per Article 4 of the Constitution) and, on the other hand, that the *constitution itself* is not advisory but rather *binding and authoritative* on all member churches. This seems to be the very nature of a constitution.

The concern centers specifically on what is stated in the Article 5.2 of the Constitution concerning membership being eligible only to those churches which “maintain the marks of the true church.” Such a way of stating the entry qualification appears to make *binding* upon all member churches, by the *decision* of NAPARC to admit them, the acceptance of all other member churches as true and faithful. Synod Carman, in its deliberations concerning NAPARC, did not believe that this is in fact the case based on what is clearly stated in Article 4 and yet did express the concern that the present wording of Article 5.2 (which appears to *bind* member churches to a *decision* of NAPARC) may not be in harmony with Article 4 of the very same Constitution. We would ask the Committee of Review whether Article 5.2 could be reworded in such a way as to take away the tension (perceived or real) between itself and Article 4.

Brothers, once again thank you for your consideration of our input.

Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad via its Subcommittee West

On behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches,

P.H. Holtvlüwer
Chairman

H. van Delden
Corresponding Secretary

Appendix 7 - Committee of Review Letter of Response

Note: The following response was received from NAPARC's Committee of Review along with a request for permission to share both our original letter plus the CoR's response with the rest of the NAPARC churches to benefit their understanding of some of the proposed changes to the Constitution. Permission was granted and these two documents were distributed to all NAPARC churches in the docket package for NAPARC 2013. The explanation (below) of the CoR was not challenged on any point.

NORTH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF REVIEW

607 N. Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19046

The Rev. H. van Delden [sic], Corresponding Secretary
Committee for Contact With Churches In North America
Of the Canadian Reformed Churches
536 Rosseau Avenue West Winnipeg, MB R2C 1X8

Dear Brothers,
July 29, 2013

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Thank you for your kind words in your July 12, 2013, letter regarding our report and for sharing your concerns with us about several items in the amendments to the *Constitution* and *Bylaws* that we are proposing to the next meeting of NAPARC.

We understand that we might still end up with differing thoughts regarding the items you raise, but we thought it might be helpful to see if we might be able to address at least some of them. We'll take them up in the order in which you present them (our references will be to the final form of the proposed amendments to the *Constitution* and *Bylaws*; a copy of our full Report Portfolio, dated May 1, 2013, is attached).

1. Activities for Young People (Constitution IV.5). The idea behind this addition to the functions of NAPARC was voiced by Delegates during the discussion time at the 35th (2009) Meeting of NAPARC (cf. APPENDIX 6 to our *Report of the NAPARC of Review to 38th (2012) Meeting of NAPARC*, page 44 [items 6 and 8] and page 45 [item 5]), particularly the plea of a brother, ministering in a more isolated circumstance in North America, regarding the difficulty his covenant young people had in finding suitable spouses within the local Reformed community. With regard to the practicalities of promoting such, the Committee, in suggesting the addition of this clause, had in mind the kinds of things enumerated in (proposed) Informational Document 11: Suggestions for Those Involved in Planning Activities for Our Young People (2012) included in May 1, 2013, report.
2. Inclusion of a Public Service for the Worship of God (Bylaws I.1). We understand that this may be a more difficult provision upon which to reach a consensus. We would begin by

observing that we are not suggesting that NAPARC itself either call or conduct the service (*cf.* [proposed]) Informational Document 3: Suggested Orders of the Day for the Annual Meeting [2012], A.2.b), and most of us would likely be opposed to the idea of such. Rather, we're proposing that, in ordering its meetings, NAPARC plan to recess its plenary sessions for the first evening, so as to allow the session/consistory of a local congregation of the host Member Church to call for and conduct a public worship on the delightful occasion of having so many brothers (in their individual capacities as brothers, not as churches) from all over North America together in one place—brothers who are already joined with us and one another in Christ. We would also note that our proposed amendment includes the word “ordinarily,” which we hope would, among other things, respect the consciences of sessions/consistories of local congregations of a Member Church who might be unable, by conviction, to call or conduct such a service.

3. Discussion Regarding Progress Towards Organic Union (as proposed by the Interim Committee) (Bylaws IV.3.X). This item is intended to be a placeholder in the Docket for the annual meeting. Matters for such discussion, if any, may be proposed only by the Interim Committee (*cf.* Bylaws VI.4.b(3)), which includes one representative Delegate from each Member Church. On the role of NAPARC in the “hold[ing] out before each other,” the Committee reported last year: “Your Committee is united in the conviction that any proposal for one Member Church to begin a process of uniting organically with another Member Church(es) should originate in the appropriate assembly(s) of the Member Churches themselves, and should not be initiated or driven by NAPARC” (*cf.* [proposed] Informational Document 12: Pursuit of Organic Union [2012]).

4. Activities for Young People (Bylaws IV.3.XVI.f). See discussion at 1., above; likewise with regard to the reference to youth ministries in Bylaws V.4.

5. Replacement of an Incapacitated NAPARC Officer (Bylaws VI.4.n). The Committee's concern is that an officer for NAPARC be, so to speak, presbyter “material,” even if, by reasons of different polities, he is no longer serving in that office because his church practices term eldership. While we still prefer the form in which our amendment was presented, and we believe that the formulation you propose is too broad, we could accept an amendment to proposed Bylaws VI.4.n that would read:

n. in the event an Officer of the Council becomes incapacitated or is otherwise unable or unwilling to continue to serve, appoint a minister or elder presbyter—(or a member of the interchurch relations committee who has been previously ordained as an elder) of a Member Church to perform the functions of that office on an interim basis (until such time as the Interim Committee determines the Officer is able to resume his duties).

6. Perceived Tension Between Constitution Articles V and VI.2. We appreciate the tension you identify. Because your letter refers to the current numbering of the articles of the Constitution (i.e., Articles IV and V.2), rather than the renumbering of the articles being

proposed in the amendments, we wonder whether the amendment we are proposing might already address your concern:

V. NATURE AND EXTENT OF AUTHORITY

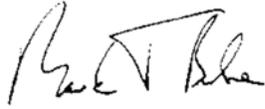
It is understood that the Council is not a synodical, classical, or presbyterial assembly, and therefore all actions and decisions of the Council, other than those with respect to a church's membership in the Council (Constitution, VI.4), taken are advisory in character and may in no way curtail, or restrict, or intrude into the exercise of the jurisdiction or authority given to the governing assemblies of the Member Churches by Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church. The autonomy of the member bodies.

The Council possesses no ecclesiastical jurisdiction or authority of its own to exercise; it can only determine eligibility for its own membership according to constitutionally specified criteria. We hope our proposed amendment makes it clear that the *only* matters which the Council itself is competent to adjudicate with respect to the Member Churches are those pertaining to a federation's membership status *vis-à-vis* the Council. Only the Council (following its own constitutional process) can admit, suspend, restore, or terminate the membership of a federation in the Council. One federation cannot unilaterally vote itself into the Council, nor can any Member Church unilaterally suspend, restore, or terminate the membership of another Member Church in the Council: such actions addressing the membership status of a federation in the Council require an action of the Council itself. But apart from such membership status issues, *no* action of the Council can bind a Member Church.

With regard to your particular inquiry, perhaps a way forward is to say that, while a decision of the Council regarding whether a particular federation “profess[es] and maintain[s] the basis for fellowship (*Constitution* II)” and “maintain[s] the marks of the true church” (*Constitution* VI.2) is determinative *solely* for the purpose of adjudicating whether a particular federation is eligible for the status of membership in the Council, it cannot bind the Member Churches in their bilateral relations among themselves. In proposing our amendment to this article, we desired to make it abundantly clear that the Council is not a legislative body: it has no power to make pronouncements on any issues that would bind a Member Church in its own affairs (*cf.* the last sentence of the opening paragraph of *Bylaws* Article V; the first sentence of Article V.2; and Article V.5.b). So for example, if a Member Church votes in the negative on the question of whether to admit a particular federation into membership in the Council, but the vote to admit nevertheless carries with the required two-thirds, then yes, the federation becomes a member of the Council, but the issue of whether that new Member Church maintains the mark of the true church for purposes of the bilateral relations between the two Member Churches has not been settled by the decision of the Council. We realize that this seems to result in an awkward outcome—and that the Member Church which voted in the negative might perceive some pressure to revisit its thinking in the matter (given the implied advice received from the other Member Churches in the matter)—but such are the burdens we bear in our earthly pilgrimages. Even as we have to “agree to disagree” in certain matters, we nevertheless still also have to find a way to live together and encourage one another in Christ.

Again, we want to thank you for taking the time to share your concerns with us, and we hope our responses have been helpful. May our gracious Lord continue to use your labors for His own glory and the increase of His kingdom.

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark T. Bube". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

Mark T. Bube
FOR THE NAPARC COMMITTEE OF REVIEW

Appendix 8 – Revised Constitution of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council

CONSTITUTION

[As amended by the 3rd (1977), 22nd (1996) and 40th (2014) Meetings of the Council]

I. NAME

The name of the Council (“the Council”) shall be The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (“NAPARC”).

II. BASIS

Confessing Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Sovereign Lord over all of life, we affirm the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts, and to its teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

III. PURPOSE

We regard this basis of fellowship as warrant for the establishment of a formal relationship of the nature of a council, that is, a fellowship that enables the Member Churches to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another, and to hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.

IV. PURPOSE AND FUNCTION

1. Facilitate discussion, consultation, and the sharing of insights among Member Churches on those issues and problems which divide them as well as on those which they face in common.
2. Encourage the Member Churches to pursue closer ecclesiastical relations, as appropriate, among the regional and major assemblies.
3. Promote the appointment of committees to study matters of common interest and concern and, when appropriate, make recommendations to the Council with respect to them.
4. Exercise mutual concern in the perpetuation, retention, and propagation of the Reformed faith.
5. Promote local, regional, and general assembly/synodical-wide cooperation wherever possible and feasible in such areas as missions, relief efforts, training of men for the ministry, Christian schools, activities for young people, and church education and publications.
6. Operate a website to facilitate the exchange of information and to foster increased cooperation and fellowship among the Member Churches.

V. NATURE AND EXTENT OF AUTHORITY

It is understood that the Council is not a synodical, classical, or presbyterial assembly, and therefore all actions and decisions of the Council, other than those with respect to a church’s membership in the Council (*Constitution*, VI.4), are advisory in character and may in no way curtail, restrict, or intrude into the exercise of the jurisdiction or authority given to the governing assemblies of the Member Churches by Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church.

VI. MEMBERSHIP

1. The Council was duly constituted on October 31, 1975, by the delegates from the five founding Member Churches, having been previously authorized to do so by their major assemblies. A list of past and present members of the Council shall be maintained among the Council's documents.
2. Those Churches eligible for membership are those which profess and maintain the basis for fellowship (Constitution, II) and which maintain the marks of the true church (the pure preaching of the gospel, the Scriptural administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of discipline).
3. A major assembly's application for membership must be sponsored by the major assemblies of at least two Member Churches and shall include copies (either paper or digital) of the applicant's confessional standards, declaratory acts (if applicable), form of government, and form(s) of subscription, together with a brief overview of their history, ecclesiastical relationships, memberships in ecumenical organizations, missions activities, and the theological education of their ministers.
4. Admission to, suspension from, restoration to (after suspension), and termination of membership shall be proposed by the Council to the Member Churches by two-thirds of the ballots cast by unit vote; this proposal must then be approved within three years by two-thirds of the major assemblies of the Member Churches eligible to vote. A proposal to suspend or terminate the membership of a Member Church may be initiated only by a major assembly of a Member Church eligible to vote. A suspended church may send Delegates to meetings of the Council but they shall not vote nor may that church be represented on the Interim Committee.

VII. AMENDMENTS

This *Constitution* may be amended by recommendation of the Council by two-thirds of the ballots cast by unit vote of the Member Churches' Delegates, and this recommendation must then be adopted within three years by two-thirds of the major assemblies of the Member Churches eligible to vote. The amendment as recommended to the Member Churches is not amendable.

Appendix 9 – Bylaws of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council

BYLAWS

[As amended by the 4th (1978), 5th (1979), 7th (1981), 8th (1982), 15th (1989), 22nd (1996), 32nd (2006), 36th (2010), and 39th (2013) Meetings of the Council]

I. MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

1. The Council shall ordinarily meet annually on the second Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of November, convening at 1:30 p.m. on the Tuesday and adjourning no later than noon on the Thursday. On the Tuesday evening, there will ordinarily be a public devotional service (which includes the reading and preaching of Scripture by a minister of the host Member Church, prayer, singing, and, if the session/consistory conducting the service so chooses, an offering for a beneficiary of its choosing) conducted by a session/consistory of one of the nearby congregations of the host Member Church, to which members of nearby congregations of Member Churches will be invited; and on the Wednesday evening, there will ordinarily be a banquet and program arranged by the host Member Church.

2. The host Member Church will ordinarily be chosen (alphabetically) from the *List of NAPARC Member Churches (Bylaws, IX.1)*; if a Member Church is not able to host the next meeting, the next listed (alphabetically) Member Church(es) will be asked until a host Member Church is secured. Before adjournment the Council shall determine the host, the date, and the place for the next meeting.

3. All meetings shall be open, except when the Council decides to meet in Executive Session.

II. DELEGATES AND VOTING

1. Each Member Church shall appoint no more than four Delegates to each meeting of the Council and, except as otherwise provided, shall bear the cost of its Delegates' travel, housing, and meal expenses in attending the meeting.

2. Each Delegate of the Member Church shall be entitled to vote on items before the Council. Voting on major decisions (as determined by the Council) shall be by unit vote of the Member Churches' Delegates.

3. Except as otherwise provided herein, a (simple) majority vote in the affirmative adopts any motion.

III. OFFICERS OF THE COUNCIL

1. Each meeting of the Council shall elect its own Officers, as follows: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Vice-Chairman of the previous annual meeting shall normally succeed to the office of Chairman and shall be declared elected by acclamation, unless the Council determines to conduct an election.

2. The responsibilities of the Officers will be as follows:

- a. Chairman
 - (1) preside at meetings of the Council
 - (2) make required appointments
 - (3) see that business is conducted in an orderly manner
 - (4) conduct, with the Vice-Chairman, the annual internal audit of the Council's accounts and report the results to the Council.
- b. Vice-Chairman
 - (1) assist the Chairman upon his request
 - (2) succeed to the chairmanship at the next annual meeting after the election of Officers
 - (3) conduct, with the Chairman, the annual internal audit of the Council's accounts and report the results to the Council.
- c. Secretary
 - (1) prepare and present to the Interim Committee (*Bylaws*, VI) an annual written report regarding his labors on behalf of the Council
 - (2) prepare a draft of the Docket for the next meeting of the Interim Committee
 - (3) prepare a draft of the Docket for the next meeting of the Council, for proposal by the Interim Committee to the Council
 - (4) keep a roll of Delegates to the meetings of the Council and the Interim Committee
 - (5) receive materials for the Docket of the next meeting of the Council and distribute them, with the drafts of the Dockets, to the Delegates no later than four weeks prior to the date of the meetings
 - (6) record and distribute the *Minutes* of the meetings of the Council and the Interim Committee to the Member Churches
 - (7) communicate the actions of the Council to appropriate parties, including the extension of invitations to Official Observers (*Bylaws*, VII.1) and Other Guests (*Bylaws*, VII.2)
 - (8) arrange for the preparation of a Press Release of the meeting of the Council (for approval by the Interim Committee) suitable for posting on the Council's website and distribute it to the Member Churches with the *Minutes* of the meetings

- (9) execute documents as required or authorized by the Council (or the Interim Committee)
 - (10) carry on correspondence on behalf of the Council with regard to inquiries from the public, to the work of the Council (and its Committees and Conferences), and to the next meeting of the Council
 - (11) respond to requests for “NAPARC’s position” on a matter with a list of the relevant adopted statements of the Member Churches, if any, including their grounds
 - (12) serve *ex officio* as a member of the Website Committee and provide counsel to the Webmaster as appropriate
 - (13) maintain updated copies of the Council’s *Constitution, Bylaws, and Informational Documents (Bylaws, IX)*, as they may be amended from time to time
 - (14) maintain the archives of the Council’s documents, including the *Minutes* and papers from all of its prior meetings, and arrange for their safe storage in a climate-controlled facility
 - (15) maintain a cumulative list of the topics of ongoing and completed studies by the major assemblies of the Member Churches, compiled from the annual Reports from the Member Churches (and other sources available to him), for distribution to the Member Churches with the *Minutes* of the meetings.
- d. Treasurer
- (1) keep full and accurate accounts of receipts into and disbursements from the Council’s Treasury in books belonging to the Council
 - (2) receive and disburse the funds of the Council in accordance with the directions of the Council (or the Interim Committee, pursuant to *Bylaws, VI.4.e*)
 - (3) deposit all funds of the Council in the name and to the credit of the Council in federally insured or other accounts as may be designated by the Council
 - (4) execute documents as required or authorized by the Council (or the Interim Committee)
 - (5) monitor the funds of the Council and alert the Interim Committee to significant deteriorations in the Council’s financial condition that might undermine the Council’s ability to meet its financial obligations
 - (6) submit periodic reports to the Council, as he deems appropriate or is requested by the Interim Committee
 - (7) submit an annual financial report to the Council (which shall be audited each year by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman prior to the meeting of the Council, with a report given to the Council) summarizing: all receipts and disbursements; deposits and withdrawals from the Council’s accounts;

and the Council's assets (including bank accounts and investments, and interest/dividends earned thereupon).

3. Terms of office:
 - a. The Chairman shall serve for a one-year term, such term beginning with his election at the annual meeting at which he presides and concluding after the election of Officers at the next annual meeting.
 - b. The Vice-Chairman shall serve a one-year term and shall normally succeed the Chairman after the election of Officers at the next annual meeting.
 - c. The Secretary and Treasurer shall serve for one-year terms and shall be eligible for re-election.

IV. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL

1. The Council shall deal only with:
 - a. communications received from Member Churches;
 - b. inquiries from churches for membership;
 - c. reports produced by its Committees;
 - d. official documents from organizations with which Member Churches are cooperating (but only when endorsed for the Council's consideration by an appropriate agency of such Member Church); and
 - e. such matters as may by two-thirds majority vote be declared properly before the Council.

2. Materials for the Docket shall be in the hands of the Secretary at least six weeks prior to the meeting date of the Council and shall be sent to Delegates four weeks prior to the meeting of the Council. Materials for the Docket received after the deadline shall be reviewed by the Interim Committee before they are given to the Council for consideration regarding their inclusion in the Docket (*Bylaws*, IV.1.e and VI.4.b).

3. The regular Docket of the meeting of the Council shall be as follows:
 - I. Call to Order
 - II. Roll Call
 - a. Member Churches
 - b. Official Observers
 - III. Approval of *Minutes*
 - IV. Communications (including Report of the Interim Committee)
 - V. Adoption of the Docket
 - VI. Election of Officers: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer
 - VII. Announcement of Additional Delegates Appointed to the Interim Committee
 - VIII. Reports from Member Churches*

- IX. Reports from Official Observer Churches
- X. Discussion Regarding Progress Towards Organic Union (as proposed by the Interim Committee)
- XI. Treasurer's Report
- XII. Reports and Appointment of Operating Committees
 - a. Website Committee
- XIII. Old Business
- XIV. Reports of Study Committees (if any)
- XV. Reports of Conferences (if any)
- XVI. Reports on Consultations (and, where appropriate, appointment of host and convener for the next Consultation)
 - a. Home Missions
 - b. World Missions
 - c. Christian/Church Education
 - d. Relief/Diaconal Ministries
 - e. Theological Training
 - f. Youth Ministries
- XVII. Arrangements for Next Meeting (host, place, date, and invitees)
- XVIII. Any Remaining Items from the Report of the Interim Committee (including approval of the proposed budget)
- XIX. New Business**
- XX. Adjournment

* This is a time when the Delegates assemble to share reports from their churches, to talk about important issues raised, and to pray with and for each other (see *Suggested Form for Member Church Reports—Bylaws, IX.2*).

** Matters to be taken up under New Business shall be determined not later than the Adoption of the Docket.

V. COMMITTEES, CONFERENCES, AND CONSULTATIONS

The Council may establish and appoint both Operating Committees and Study Committees as it deems appropriate. These Committees shall continue until the matters assigned to them have been completed, and report annually to the Council. It may also call Conferences on subjects of mutual concern and arrange for Consultations among the agencies of the Member Churches. The mandates of the respective Committees and Special Conferences shall be included in the Council's *Informational Documents*. In the discharge of their respective mandates, Committees, Conferences, and Consultations shall take care not to infringe or intrude upon the prerogatives of the Member Churches for the conduct of their own ministries.

1. NAPARC Operating Committees

Operating Committees are established, normally with three to five members (together with an alternate), to oversee a particular part of the Council's operations (e.g., the Website). Members of an Operating Committee shall be appointed each year and may be reappointed to serve at the pleasure of the Council. The Council will designate a chairman for the Operating Committee from among the appointees, and the Operating Committee shall elect from among its members a secretary, who will keep minutes of the meetings and send copies to the Council's Secretary. The expenses of an Operating Committee shall be borne by the Treasury.

2. NAPARC Study Committees

Study Committees are established to study matters of mutual concern to the Member Churches and, when appropriate, to make recommendations to the Council with respect to such matters (bearing in mind the nature and extent of the Council's authority, *Constitution*, V). If it is desired that each of the Member Churches be represented in a Study Committee, the option of participating and the manner of selecting its representative(s) shall be left to each Member Church; otherwise, the (normally five to seven) members (together with one or two alternates) of the Study Committee shall be elected by the Council with a view to their particular competency and experience in the subject matter, and with a view to the diversity of perspectives among the Member Churches. The Council shall designate one of the Member Churches to convene the Study Committee. The Study Committee shall elect from among its members a chairman and a secretary, who will keep minutes of the meetings and send copies to the Council's Secretary. All reports (other than interim reports) of Study Committees should be submitted to the Council's Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than four months before the meeting at which such reports are to be considered. In discharging its mandate, the Study Committee shall solicit the input of the Member Churches (through their appropriate agencies). The expenses of a Study Committee shall ordinarily be borne by the Treasury.

3. NAPARC Conferences

The Council may call Conferences on subjects of mutual concern to which all Member Churches are urged to send representatives. The Council shall designate one of the Member Churches to convene the Conference and to appoint a chairman and a secretary, who will keep minutes of the Conference and send copies to the Council's Secretary. All reports (other than interim reports) of Conferences should be submitted to the Council's Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than four months before the meeting at which such reports are to be considered. Unless the Council determines otherwise (and authorizes a special appropriation), the expenses of operating the Conference (e.g., meeting hall rental, speakers' honoraria, promotional materials, etc.) shall be borne by the Treasury, but the travel, housing, and meal expenses of the Member Churches' representatives in attending the Conference shall be borne by their sending church.

4. NAPARC Consultations

Representatives of the appropriate corresponding agencies of the Member Churches (e.g., home missions, world missions, Christian/church education, relief/diaconal ministries, theological training, youth ministries) are encouraged to gather together periodically with their counterparts in the other Member Churches to consult with each other regarding the ministries that have been entrusted to them and to explore ways in which they might cooperate with one another to advance the cause of Christ. Before each Consultation adjourns, it shall select a host agency, a chairman, and a secretary, and set the date and place, for the next Consultation, and communicate such (together with the date, place, and host agency of the current Consultation) to the Council's Secretary. If, at the time of the annual meeting of the Council, neither a host nor a chairman has been selected by the Consultation itself, or if some years have elapsed since the Consultation has last met, the Council may encourage the Consultation to meet in the coming year, and towards that end, the Council may appoint a host and a convener for such meeting. Ordinarily the minutes of a Consultation's proceedings shall not be circulated beyond the participants in the Consultation. The travel, housing, and meal expenses of the Member Churches' representatives in attending the Consultation shall be borne by their sending church.

5. Materials and Conclusions

The materials and conclusions of Study Committees and Conferences shall be sent by the Council's Secretary to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches and to the Interim Committee.

- a. The chief uses of materials and conclusions of the NAPARC Study Committees or Conferences are for
 - (1) the information and instruction of Member Churches, and
 - (2) the conveying of possible responses, approval, disagreement, or further study by Member Churches to one another.
- b. The materials and conclusions are to be considered the property of the several Member Churches and may be used and publicized by them only in their own name unless also approved by other Member Churches. Joint publicity of the results of a Study Committee or Conference shall be by the Member Churches themselves, as distinguished from publicity by the Council, which is consultative rather than policy making. Neither the Council nor its Study Committees or Conferences may speak for the Member Churches.
- c. The ultimate purpose of the Study Committees and Conferences is to search the Scriptures for the enrichment of our understanding of God's truth, to discuss the application of God's Word in the life of the churches, and to seek unity through the development of a common commitment and cooperation.

VI. INTERIM COMMITTEE

1. The Interim Committee shall consist of the Officers of the Council (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer—*Bylaws*, III), together with one representative Delegate from each Member Church, as appointed by his delegation. When the Secretary

and/or Treasurer serves for more than one consecutive term, his delegation may elect an additional member to the Interim Committee, if desired. Each Member Church shall have one vote on the Interim Committee. Ordinarily only members (or designated alternates) of the Interim Committee shall attend Interim Committee meetings.

2. The Interim Committee shall ordinarily meet on the first day of the Council's meeting (*Bylaws*, I.1), from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., to conduct its business.

3. The Member Churches shall bear the expenses of their Delegates to Interim Committee meetings.

4. Its functions shall be limited to those specified below:

- a. make the arrangements for the meeting of the Council
- b. propose a Docket for the meeting of the Council, including:
 - (1) reviewing materials received after the deadline for submission of such and making a recommendation with respect to their inclusion in the Docket (*Bylaws*, IV.1.e)
 - (2) assigning the responsibility for preparing questions concerning the report of a Member Church and leading the meeting in prayer for that Member Church at the conclusion of the consideration of its report
 - (3) suggesting matters for discussion regarding progress towards organic union (*Bylaws*, IV.3.X)
- c. call meetings of the Council or of the Operating or Study Committees when unusual circumstances warrant
- d. give counsel to the Secretary regarding correspondence and procedure, and review his annual report
- e. deal responsibly with all matters inadvertently overlooked which call for action before the next meeting of the Council
- f. advise the Council on matters coming before it
- g. propose to the Council a nomination for the host Member Church for the next year's meeting of the Council (usually selected alphabetically from the *List of NAPARC Member Churches*—*Bylaws*, IX.1), together with the date and place of that meeting
- h. propose to the Council nominations for the Officers of this year's meeting: Chairman (usually the Vice-Chairman of the prior year's meeting), Vice-Chairman (usually selected alphabetically from the *List of NAPARC Member Churches*, with a view to his serving as Chairman of the next year's meeting), Secretary, and Treasurer
- i. propose to the Chairman nominations for the members (and chairman) of each Operating Committee
- j. regarding the establishment of a Study Committee, propose to the Council:
 - (1) a mandate for such Study Committee;
 - (2) whether such Study Committee should be composed of a member from each of the Member Churches or by election by the Council, and if the

latter, propose to the Council nominations for the members of such Study Committee; and

(3) a nomination for the convening Member Church

k. propose to the Council a budget for the following year, including such honoraria as it deems appropriate

l. extend invitations to non-Member Churches that adopt the basis of the fellowship of NAPARC (*Constitution*, II) to send (at their own expense) Official Observers (*Bylaws*, VII.1) to the next meeting

m. extend invitations to other non-Member Churches to send (at their own expense) observers (as “Other Guests,” *Bylaws*, VII.2) to the next meeting

n. in the event an Officer of the Council becomes incapacitated or is otherwise unable or unwilling to continue to serve, appoint a minister or elder (or a member of the interchurch relations committee who has previously been ordained as an elder) of a Member Church to perform the functions of that office on an interim basis (until such time as the Interim Committee determines the Officer is able to resume his duties).

5. When it becomes necessary for the Interim Committee to act at a time other than that of its usual time of meeting (*Bylaws*, VI.2), the Interim Committee is authorized: (i) to meet by conference call, at the call of the Chairman and/or the Secretary, to take the necessary action(s); or (ii) if the matter is primarily of an administrative nature (including the approval of a Press Release), to take the necessary action by an informal exchange of email initiated by the Chairman and/or the Secretary—but only if there is no objection either to the proposed action itself or to the making of the decision by such procedure. All such actions, whether by conference call or by email exchange, shall be reported to the next meeting of the Council.

VII. OFFICIAL OBSERVERS AND OTHER GUESTS

1. Official Observers are duly appointed representatives of non-Member Churches that adopt the basis of fellowship of NAPARC (*Constitution*, II) and are invited to attend the meeting (at their own expense) by the Interim Committee. Up to two Official Observers per sending church may be given the privilege of the floor, which may be revoked at any time by a majority vote of the Delegates present.

2. All persons present for the meeting who are neither Delegates nor Official Observers (*Bylaws*, VII.1) shall be considered as “Other Guests.” A two-thirds majority vote of the Delegates present shall be required to grant the privilege of the floor to Other Guests, which may be subsequently revoked at any time by a majority vote of the Delegates present.

VIII. FINANCES

The Council shall establish a Treasury, into which all assessments and other receipts shall be deposited, and out of which, all expenses of the Council shall be paid or reimbursed in accordance with the actions and policies of the Council.

1. Assessments

a. Each meeting of the Council shall approve a budget for the Council for the next year, including a total amount to be received from the assessment of dues to the Member Churches.

b. The annual dues to be assessed to each Member Church shall be determined by dividing the total amount to be received from the assessment of dues to the Member Churches (included in 1.a, above) for that year by the total number of Member Churches.

2. Council Meeting Expenses

a. The Treasury shall ordinarily bear the following expenses:

- (1) all food consumed by Delegates, Official Observers, Other Guests, and their spouses at the mid-day and evening meals arranged by the host Member Church during the meetings of the Council;
- (2) costs of travel and accommodations for the Secretary and the Treasurer when they are not Delegates.

b. Unless the Council determines otherwise with respect to a particular request for payment or reimbursement, the Treasury shall not bear any of the following expenses:

- (1) costs of travel or accommodations to attend the meeting of the Council;
- (2) expenses of Official Observers or Other Guests (except as provided in 2.a.(1), above);
- (3) expenses of spouses of Delegates, Official Observers, and Other Guests (except as provided in 2.a.(1), above).

3. Other Expenses. The Treasury shall also bear the expenses for:

- (1) all honoraria approved by the Council;
- (2) meetings of the Interim Committee;
- (3) meetings of Operating Committees, Facilitating Committees, and Study Committees;
- (4) conducting Conferences (e.g., meeting hall rental; speakers' travel, meals, accommodation, and honoraria; promotional materials, etc.), but not for the travel, meals, or accommodation of the participants;
- (5) other items included in the budget approved by the Council.

IX. INFORMATIONAL DOCUMENTS

The Council will maintain a collection of its *Informational Documents* which might be useful to the Member Churches in pursuing the dual purposes for which the Council was established (*Constitution*, III). Either the collection, or a particular document listed therein, may be amended on motion passed by a majority of the voting Delegates, with the exception of the *List of NAPARC Member Churches* (which may be amended only as provided for in *Constitution*, VI.4). Included in the collection are the following:

1. List of NAPARC Member Churches
2. Suggested Form for Member Church Reports (2013)
3. Suggested Orders of the Day for the Annual Meeting (2012)
4. Suggested Structure for Conferences (1976)
5. List of NAPARC Operating and Study Committees (with their respective mandates)
6. List of NAPARC Consultations
7. Definition of Organic Union (2003)
8. Chart of Similarities and Differences Among the NAPARC Member Churches (including 2007 updates)
9. NAPARC “Golden Rule” Comity Agreement (1984)
10. NAPARC Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations (1987)
11. Suggestions for Those Involved in Planning Activities for Our Young People (2012)
12. Pursuit of Organic Union (2012)

X. AMENDMENTS

These *Bylaws* may be amended or suspended by the Council on motion passed by two-thirds of the ballots cast by unit vote of the Member Churches’ Delegates.

Appendix 10 Brief History of the KPCA (Kosin)

Note: What follows is a summary of the brief history of the Korea Presbyterian Church of America (Kosin) as related by Rev. Young J. Woo and Rev. James Alderman at the meeting held on Nov 12, 2014.

The KPCA (Kosin) is a daughter church of the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK). The Kosin PCK originated out of a revival which started in Pyongyang (now in present-day North Korea) in 1907. Following occupation by Japan and forced emperor worship (which took place more or less during the first half of the 20th century), a number of churches and ministers resisted this shrine worship, as well as the competing pressure due to liberalization. Christians were threatened and some imprisoned for maintaining their confession until the end of World War II.

However, some church members, including pastors, compromised their faith in order to avoid persecution. After the war, a process of purification within the church was proposed where, during a three-month hiatus, compromising pastors could indicate repentance by their absence. They refused, and because of this and the increasing liberalization, the conservative ministers withdrew from the Korean Presbyterian Church (KPC), calling themselves “Kosin.” The term “Kosin” is an abbreviation or short-form for the Korean Theological Seminary which was the centre of the reform effort.

At a later point, another group called “HapDong” broke away from the KPC over membership in the World Council of Churches (WCC). Since 1975, there is another Kosin church, and currently there are discussions underway with a view to reunite these two Kosin churches. There are also discussions with a group known as “HapSin” (a more recent split from HapDong) with a view to moving toward federative unity. Yet another group, the Independent Korea Reformed Church was formed by a Rev. Kim (Rev. Heon Soo Kim?) who had pastored for 30 years in the US before going back to Korea.

In North America, the majority of the KPCA (Kosin) churches are in the United States. There has been contact between Rev. Woo (who pastors a flock in Denver) and Rev. Ryan Kampen of the American Reformed Church in Denver. Rev. Alderman pastors a congregation in the Philadelphia area, in the same building as Reformation Church of Blue Bell (now merged with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)). There are also four churches in Canada, three small ones in the Toronto Area, and a larger one in the Vancouver area.

The KPCA (Kosin) is still mostly inward-oriented and focused on survival. Cooperation and outward focus is just starting. Language difference is a very significant

challenge. Because of the language and the secularization of the youth, it is estimated that about 50% of the Korean-speaking churches will have disappeared in about 15 years. The first generation has been devoted to church matters, but the second generation less so, even though it possesses more financial resources.

It was noted that within Korea, the Presbyterian Churches combined are the largest group of Christians there, with membership numbering in the millions. Also, there are a large number of groups within the Presbyterian Churches in Korea.

- Prepared by Gerrit Bos

Appendix 11 Report on Visit to the 30th General Assembly of KPCA (Kosin)

Note: The General Assembly was held in Chicago, Il, on October 27-31, 2014.

Hospitable Spirit

In response to an invitation received from Rev. Young J. Woo, chairman of the Inter-church Relations Committee of the KPCA (Kosin), I (together with my wife) set out to attend and observe their 30th General Assembly in Chicago. The invitation came to me in my capacity as both NAPARC chairman (at this time) and member of the CCCNA. Arriving by car on the evening before the GA was to begin (Oct 27), we were instantly welcomed at the hotel by several of their leaders who were fully expecting us. Though the language spoken everywhere by all delegates was Korean, Rev. Woo quickly placed himself by our side as translator and guide throughout our stay. From the beginning to the end, the Korean brethren showed us the warmest hospitality, regularly ensuring we were looked after for accommodations, meals and whatever else. It was clear to us that they placed a high value on our visit.

Korean Praise and Worship

On Monday evening (Oct 27), we were treated to a series of various performances designed to mark, with thankfulness to God, the 30th Anniversary of their General Assembly. In a rented church facility, we, along with a crowd of delegates plus local people from the broader Korean community (which is large in Chicago, over 200,000), observed a traditional Korean women's dance followed by male and female choral groups, soloists and full choirs. All of it was directed as praise to the Lord and some of the tunes were recognizable to us (including Handel's *Messiah* in part Korean, part English). The most clear and powerful praise came in the closing song, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* – one sung most heartily in Korean (and the same in English by two Canadians!).

On the following evening, in conjunction with the official start of the GA, a prayer service was held in the nearby KPCA (Kosin) church building. The pews were mostly full, a gathering composed of delegates as well as local congregants, a sum total of 200-250 people. The service presented a mixture of elements, some quite new to us. As an introduction to the prayer service, a group of young people led the congregation in singing contemporary western choruses (in Korean) in the "praise and worship" genre. Making use of an over-head projector (to show lyrics) and guitar, drums, and other instruments, the enthusiastic and charismatic young Korean leader soon had everyone singing along. It was noticeable that the older and younger members sang these choruses with the same zeal.

Preaching and Prayer

Following this 20-25 minute introduction, the outgoing moderator of the GA (it's typically an annual appointment) began the service proper with prayer soon followed by a sermon based on Acts 20 (v.32 in particular, I believe; only one verse was read). Rev. Woo kindly translated the main message of the sermon. What struck me about this portion of the service is how little Scripture was actually read. There was no second Scripture reading (as we are accustomed to) nor was there a reading of the context. The sermon was about 35 minutes long. From what I could gather, the minister explained the context of Paul's statement in his whole ministry (there were a number of references to earlier in Acts) and then went directly into the situation of the KPCA (Kosin). It is difficult to judge in translation, but what I missed was a redemptive-historical approach that places Christ in the center. It seemed more exemplaristic to me.

The remainder of the service had familiar elements: singing of traditional hymns (apparently they sing very few psalms, though they have a hymn book full of traditional western hymns translated into Korean), a thank-offering, intercessory prayer and a concluding blessing. Of particular note is the manner in which the prayer following the sermon was conducted. I must admit this left my wife and I bewildered at first as we were instantly surrounded by what seemed to us to be a cacophony of noisy chatter. As Rev. Woo later explained it, the minister announced to the congregation a prayer subject (in this case, several very sick members of the GA and other leaders in the denomination) and asked the congregation to pray for them. They did – simultaneously, aloud, each one saying his own personal prayer, including the minister over the speakers. They were all noticeably animated and much louder than regular conversational volume. At the time, it seemed disorderly to us, but to the congregation it seemed normal.

Apparently this kind of “free prayer” does not happen during a Lord's Day worship service but is reserved for separate “prayer meetings” or services such as this one. When I commented to Dr. Sung Dae Kang (another minister who could speak English and who is personally familiar with the Canadian Reformed Churches) that it first appeared to us as a sort of charismatic event, he indicated that while that was not the intention, yet he also felt that such tendencies needed to be countered by strong Reformed teaching and practice so that the KPCA (Kosin) does not get taken by charismatic practices.

The General Assembly

On Wednesday morning (Oct 29), the GA began its official business and its first order was to invite myself to address the assembly. I was followed by the moderator of the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church (Kosin), their mother church. The very fact that I was first in line was an indicator to me of the high priority the KPCA (Kosin) is placing on developing relations with Reformed churches within North

America. I was introduced in my capacity as NAPARC chairman (that seemed to be the dominant connection in their minds) and also as a pastor in the CanRC. I then gave my address (see attachment) which appeared to be warmly received. Afterward I received several comments of appreciation from men I had not yet met and a few exchanged “business” cards with me with the expressed desire to take up contact at a later date.

Conversation with Dr. Kang

After my address to the GA, I found myself having an extended conversation with Dr. Kang (his English is very good) all about the KPCA (Kosin) and the Canadian Reformed Churches. Dr. Kang is presently an instructor of theology to lay-leaders in the Kosin churches in Rhode Island. He is well-acquainted with the CanRC, having spent a number of years serving as pastor of a KPCA (Kosin) congregation in Surrey, BC. He has visited the Willoughby Heights congregation on several occasions and has had good contact (that’s how he described it) with Rev. Eric Kampen and Rev. Anthon Souman.

Dr. Kang spoke freely of the challenges the Kosin churches are facing – wanting to be Reformed but combatting evangelical influences which are particularly strong in America. Also, he noted that while Korean believers are very zealous for the Lord (something I had remarked on, as evident in their enthusiastic singing, and which I felt we could learn from), their general knowledge is not deep. He personally labours to deepen that knowledge and from that point of view would value closer ties with the CanRC. The practices we have of reading Scripture at meal times, talking at home about Bible stories and how to live as Christians, and even years of Catechism training are not common in the Kosin churches. Consequently, their young people are quite vulnerable to non-Reformed influences. Their elders are not always that knowledgeable either. Yet the denomination leaders see the problem and want to promote the learning of doctrine and a deeper understanding of the Reformed faith so the Kosin churches can remain faithful on this continent. I found this discussion most enlightening.

Lunch With the Inter-Church Relations Committee

At my request, Rev. Woo organized an informal lunch meeting with his IRC, approximately a six-man committee. Most of the brothers could speak English well enough, some fluently. This was a good, healthy interchange. One brother (who recently started a Christian school) asked for more information about our Christian schools (see my speech). This was the first opportunity to get to know one-another at a committee level, so much of the dialogue was introductory, but it was warm and it was up-building.

I learned that that there were 130 congregations, mostly small, with a total estimated church membership of 5,000-6,000.⁶²

The men of this committee expressed the desire to continue in a Reformed direction as a whole denomination and to help the next generation stay Reformed. I gathered that some are seeing evangelicalism as a strong attraction for their youth and thus a threat to their continuing on a Reformed path. In part by connecting with faithful Reformed and Presbyterian churches, they hope this tide can be averted or turned.

When I asked about their rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, they explained they did not have any. The only church they have fellowship with is their mother church and this grew up naturally (there are no formal rules there either). I took a few minutes to explain how we (and other Reformed churches) conduct EF, i.e. that we make use of some rules which guide how we interact with one another. They were interested in learning more about those rules. When I asked if their denomination would be willing to send delegates to our next General Synod (if invited), they responded favourably.

Conclusion

After taking our leave the next day, my wife and I could look back with much appreciation for the warm, Christian hospitality we experienced during our stay. There seems to be a growing desire on the part of the KPCA (Kosin) to reach out to NAPARC churches including also the Canadian Reformed Churches and I hope we can mutually influence each other to be and become Reformed churches which are always reforming.

Evaluation and Recommendations

1. The KPCA (Kosin) is clearly Reformed in confession and the official desire is to keep to the Reformed path, yet there are some practices which show signs of evangelical influence. While that may make us wary of developing ties, we may also see it as an opportunity to assist our brethren in holding to the Reformed path.
2. The two federations can learn from one another. The Kosin believers show great zeal, grace and humility in their interaction amongst themselves and toward visitors, a good example for us. The CanRC have a rich heritage in psalm-singing, transmitting the doctrine from generation to generation in home-teaching (devotions), catechism and Christian schools, something we could model for them.

⁶² This was Rev. Woo's "guess-timate." Later at NAPARC, the figure submitted was 10,000. I'm not sure how to account for the discrepancy.

3. Since we already have EF with their mother church, it seems only natural and right to work toward the same with their daughter church. I suggest we seek opportunities to interact with the Kosin brothers both at NAPARC, their GA (if invited) and our own next General Synod Dunnville, 2016 (we should extend an invitation to them).

Respectfully submitted to the CCCNA,

Peter H. Holtvlüwer

Appendix 12 Report on Meeting with the IRC of the KPCA (Kosin) at NAPARC 2014

Note: This meeting was held on Wednesday, November 12, 2014 in Grassie, Ontario.

Present were:

Representing KPCA (Kosin): Rev. James Alderman, and Rev. Young J. Woo
Representing CanRC: Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer, Rev. Eric Kampen, Mr. Les Vanderveen, Mr. Cornelius (Case) Poppe, Mr. Henry Vandelden, and Mr. Gerrit Bos.

1. Peter Holtvlüwer opened the meeting with prayer
2. Introduction of each denomination:
 - a. Young Woo and James Alderman gave a brief description of the history of the Korean Presbyterian Church of America (Kosin), and the location of their churches in North America.
 - b. Eric Kampen gave a brief description of the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and the location of their churches in North America.
3. Each church discussed their current relationship with significant denominations in their countries of origin, the Kosin PCK in Korea and the RCN (Liberated) in the Netherlands.
 - a. The CanRC shared a 2014 Yearbook, and a copy of the *Acts of General Synod Carman 2013* which includes a copy of the adopted rules for ecclesiastical fellowship.
4. It was agreed that this meeting was mutually beneficial, and tentative plans were made to meet again at next year's NAPARC meeting. KPCA (Kosin) expressed interest in discussing the education of youth, the history of the transition from an "immigrant language" church to a "culture language" church.
5. There was a question regarding the relationship of the CanRC to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). It was answered that this was our "mother church," and there is still ecclesiastical fellowship between the two denominations, but strong concern regarding hermeneutics. We are independent sister churches. This is similar to the relationship of the KPCA (Kosin) church to the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea. It was pointed out that a recent report regarding the relations with the RCN (Liberated) is available at the CanRC website at: <http://canrc.org/> by clicking on: Deputies > Committees > Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad.
6. Young Woo closed the meeting with prayer of thanksgiving.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gerrit Bos