# Reports to General Synod Dunnville 2016

# VOLUME 1

- COMMITTEE FOR BIBLE TRANSLATION (CBT)
- COMMITTEE FOR CONTACT WITH CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA (CCCNA)
- COMMITTEE FOR CHURCH UNITY (CCU)
- Committee for Needy Students Fund (CNSF)



# Reports to General Synod Dunnville 2016

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# Reports to General Synod Dunnville 2016

**Committee for Bible Translation** 

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1. Mandate	NOTES
The Committee for Bible Translation (CBT), appointed by Synod Carman 2013, received the following mandate ( <i>Acts</i> , Article 97):	
4.4.1. To provide a thorough study of the effects of gender inclusive translation philosophy in the NIV2011 and the ESV, comparing also the earlier findings on this subject by the CBT on the NRSV in 1992, to ascertain whether anything is lost from God's revelation in the use of this philosophy and how it has affected each translation;	
4.4.2. To provide a thorough study of the ESV with special attention to its readability and to what degree the concerns expressed by previous iterations of the CBT about the RSV remain a concern in relation to the ESV;	
4.4.3. To solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV, to submit worthy translation changes to the ESV editorial commit- tee and monitor the response;	
4.4.4. To send the committee's critical remarks and suggestions for improvement on the five texts pertaining to women in office (see Observation 2.10.4) to the CBTNIV and monitor the response;	
4.4.5. To serve the next general synod with a report sent to the churches at least six months prior to the next general synod.	
2. Committee	
The committee members are Revs. P. Aasman (convenor, 2007), D. de Boer (2010), R. Vermeulen (2013). During this mandate two members left, Revs. R. Bredenhof and W. Bredenhof. The report, except for point 7, was produced while these brothers were still members.	
3. Effects of the Gender-Inclusive Translation Philosophy in the ESV and NIV2011	
The Committee was mandated by Synod Carman to "provide a thorough study of the effects of gender-inclusive translation philosophy in the NIV2011 and the ESV" (see 4.4.1).	
Gender-Inclusive Translation Philosophy in the NIV2011	
The "NIV Translation Philosophy" notes provided with the NIV2011 explain the philosophy and the wide-ranging choices of the NIV translators re-	
garding inclusive language. It is emphatically stated that "nowhere is there even the remotest hint of any inclusive language for God." The "gender-	

# 4 NOTES

inclusive philosophy" of the NIV2011 is concerned with the translation of the Bible's inclusive-masculine¹ language for males and females. The position of the NIV translators is that the inclusive masculine is increasingly not read as "inclusive" by modern readers. To preserve the inclusive aspect of the Bible's inclusive-masculine, the translators have made the following choices:

- 1. Generic "he" was often, though not exclusively, replaced with generic "they"<sup>2</sup> (e.g., Mark 4:25)
- The words "man" and "mankind" were occasionally used to describe human beings collectively (e.g., Mark 2:27). However, on other occasions, "people" and "humans" were used to translate Greek and Hebrew masculine forms referring to both men and women
- 3. "Ancestors" was preferred over "forefathers" (e.g., Judges 2:1)
- 4. "Brothers and sisters" was frequently used to translate the Greek *adel-phoi* in the New Testament, when it was clear that both genders were in view (e.g., Romans 8:29)

# Gender-Related Translation Philosophy in the ESV

By contrast with the NIV2011, the Translation Philosophy of the ESV translators was: "in the area of gender language... to render literally what is in the original." According to the Preface of the ESV, this led the translators to the following translation choices:

- 1. "Anyone" replaces "any man" where there is no word corresponding to "man" in the original language
- 2. "People" rather than "men" is regularly used where the original languages refer to both men and women
- 3. The word "man" is retained when the original language contrasts human beings with God
- 4. "Brothers" is retained as the translation for the Greek adelphoi
- 5. "Sons" is retained for the Greek *huioi*
- 6. The generic "he" has been regularly retained because this is consistent with similar usage in the original languages

A comparison of various texts in the NIV2011, ESV, and NRSV can be found in the section of this report entitled "On the CBT's 1992 Evaluation of the NRSV".

# Evaluation – Suitability of the Two Translation Philosophies

The choice of the CBTNIV to make a gender-inclusive translation is consistent with their overall philosophy of translation, which was described in the 1995 CanRC CBT report as "modified-literal" or "idiomatic." For instance, when the intent of the original author was to include the "sisters" in his address to the "brothers," the translation "brothers and sisters" accurately reflects that intent. This intent can be inferred from the context. Since modern readers are less likely to understand that the term "brothers" includes the "sisters," the CBTNIV believes that the gender-inclusive translation is a more effective communication of the true meaning of the origi-

nal author. Our current mandate is not to re-open a discussion about the overall translation philosophy of the CBTNIV. We can only comment that the gender-inclusive language of the NIV2011 fits its philosophy ("modified literal" or "idiomatic") and meets the criteria of accuracy under this philosophy. If we maintain the recommendations of the 1995 CBT report to Synod Abbotsford, we cannot reject the NIV2011 on the basis of the general accuracy of its translation of such Greek terms as *adelphoi* ("brothers and sisters") or *aner* (the generic "they").

On the other hand, the ESV translators chose to uphold an "essentially literal" translation. The gender-related translation philosophy of the ESV reflects the overall philosophy of the entire translation. The English terms "man," "brothers" and "sons" are literally accurate translations of the corresponding Greek and Hebrew terms. If literal correspondence to the original language is the measure of a translation's accuracy, then the ESV has accurately conveyed the meaning of the original text in regard to the use of the inclusive-masculine.

As one instance of these translation philosophies in practice, we may consider Romans 12:1. Paul addresses himself in this verse to the "brothers" (adelphoi). In translating this term, attention can be given to the fact that the Greek of the New Testament reflects the broader social context and language usage of the first century Greco-Roman world. The first century evidence cited in Greek dictionaries such as BDAG indicates that adelphoi was used in some instances to be inclusive of both men and women when they were in close affinity, such as through the sharing of beliefs.<sup>4</sup> A determination of the word's specific reference must of course be made from the context. In the case of Romans 12, it is indeed clear that the apostle's instructions are not limited in application to only the men in the congregation of Rome; interpreters and preachers correctly apply Paul's teachings to male and female believers alike. Since modern readers are increasingly likely to misunderstand the inclusiveness of "brothers," some manner of explanation is required. The ESV has chosen to do this with a recurring footnote to these texts, explaining that the term "brothers" was often used in the Greek language to refer to both men and women. The NIV2011 has chosen to help the reader by translating some instances of adelphoi as "brothers and sisters."

We conclude that both the NIV2011 and the ESV are based on a translation philosophy that enables the meaning of the original text to be accurately conveyed.

# Evaluation – The NIV2011, ESV, and Male Headship

Concerns have been raised whether gender-inclusive language undermines the principle of male headship. For example, Vern Poythress and Wayne Grudem have published their reservations about gender-neutral Bible translation in a volume with the subtitle "Muting the Masculinity of God's Words." Does gender-inclusive language in translation hinder our appreciation for the divinely appointed roles for men and women that we find taught in the Scriptures?

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We make the following observations:

- 1. The inclusive-masculine is consistent with the Biblical view of male headship and a complementarian<sup>6</sup> view of gender roles. However, there are no convincing arguments that the inclusive-masculine or generic "he" are *necessary* for the establishing and maintaining of a biblical and complementarian view of gender roles.
- 2. The shift to gender-inclusive language is consistent with a feminist agenda to promote an egalitarian<sup>7</sup> view of male and female roles. However, there is no proof that gender-inclusive terminology *necessarily* leads to a feminist egalitarian view of gender roles.
- 3. The Biblical model of male headship in family, church and society is known independently of the inclusive-masculine language of the Scriptural text. This model is explicitly taught in such passages as Genesis 1-2, Ephesians 5:22-33 and 1 Peter 3:1-7.
- 4. The modern climate of egalitarianism requires a strong determination to hold onto the Biblical teachings about men and women. As noted above, we do not believe that a translation of adelphoi as "brothers and sisters," for example, is necessarily a contradiction of the biblical view of men and women. The guestion then becomes whether such translations shape our thinking more subtly. The committee is left with the difficulty of how we would measure the effect of gender-inclusive language on the thinking of the people who read it. What, if anything, is lost of a Biblical view of men and women when an inclusive-masculine term like "mankind" is instead translated as "humans" or "people"? We do not know how to measure whether this language structure carries as much meaning as is sometimes alleged. We recognize that there can be a variety of reasons behind the move to change language structures and usage, of which some reasons are certainly related to the promotion of a feminist ideology. But given that the Bible teaches clearly and explicitly about the roles of men and women, there is no need to rely on language structure alone to convey that men are entrusted with headship and authority.
- 5. The inclusive-masculine language that has traditionally characterized English translations of the Bible requires explanation of its meaning, especially in our current culture. On the other hand, the gender-inclusive language of some recent translations also requires an explanation as to how this language relates to the original Hebrew or Greek text. Neither philosophy of translation produces a translation that has no need for further explanation. The CBT does not believe that the NIV2011's philosophy of gender-inclusive language is sufficient to make this translation untrustworthy or inaccurate; rather, as pointed out in the CBT Interim Report (2011), the difficulty resides in the application of this philosophy in some instances. We are also confident that the ESV approach does justice to the original text and renders it accurately readable to the modern audience.

# 4. On the CBT's 1992 Evaluation of the NRSV

Another aspect of our mandate was to consider the gender inclusive translation philosophy in the NIV2011 and in the ESV, doing so through a comparison with past findings on this subject by the CBT (see 4.4.1). By way of background, the CBT report to General Synod 1992 dealt with this matter in particular through its analysis of the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version). The underlying question was whether the previous findings of the CBT would be of assistance in helping us to make a further determination on the legitimacy of gender inclusive language.

To set the context of the 1992 report, we should note that the NRSV was of interest to our churches because it was an updated version of the RSV, which was widely used in the federation at the time. After carrying out their investigation, the committee recommended—and Synod 1992 agreed—rejecting the NRSV, a decision that was based primarily on the policy of inclusive language that its translators had adopted. The 1992 report detailed numerous examples where "precision of translation is sacrificed for the policy of inclusive language."

# Examples of Texts in the NRSV, Compared to NIV2011 and ESV

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An initial exercise that may assist our evaluation of gender inclusive language in the NIV2011 and in the ESV is to compare a selection of texts that were originally flagged in the 1992 report on the NRSV as being unjustified translations of the original Hebrew or Greek, and to see how the more recent translations have rendered these texts.

Text	NRSV	NIV2011	ESV
Matt 23:8 (sic; should	"members of my	"brothers and sisters	"my brothers"
be Matt 25:40)	family"	of mine"	
Luke 17:3	"another disciple"	"brother and sister"	"brother"
Acts 7:37	"people"	"people"	"brothers"
Rom 12:1 (and	"brothers and sisters"	"brothers and sisters"	"brothers" (with a
elsewhere in the NT		(with a recurring note	recurring note to
epistles)		that the Greek	indicate that the term
		adelphoi refers here to	"brothers" [adelphoi]
		believers, both men	was often used in
İ		and women, as part of	Greek to refer to both
		God's family)	men and women)
Acts 3:17	"friends"	"fellow Israelites"	"brothers"
Gal 4:28	"friends"	"brothers and sisters"	"brothers"
2 Cor 11:9	"friends"	"brothers"	"brothers"
3 John 10	"friends"	"believers"	"brothers"
Gal 2:4	"false believers"	"false believers"	"false brothers"
Gal 1:2	"members of God's family"	"brothers and sisters"	"brothers"
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Eph 6:23	"the whole community"	"brothers and sisters"	"brothers"
1 Pet 2:17 (x 2)	"everyone"	"everyone"	"everyone"
` ′	"family of believers"	"family of believers"	"brotherhood"
Rom 8:14,16-17	"children of God"	"children of God"	"sons of God"
(x 3)			"children of God"
Gal 4:5	"adoption as children"	"adoption to sonship"	"adoption as sons"
Dan 7:13	"one like a human	"one like a son of	"one like a son of
	being"	man"	man"

In its 1992 report, the CBT gave further attention to a few texts in the NRSV that pertained to gender-inclusive language as this language relates to ecclesiastical office; namely, Philippians 1:14, 1 Timothy 3:11, and Romans 16:1.

With respect to Philippians 1:14, it was observed that "most of the brothers" in the RSV had become "most of the brothers and sisters" in the NRSV. This verse was taken by the CBT to imply that both men and women were involved in the official proclamation of the Word. This verse was also discussed by the most recent CBT in their Interim Report (2011) in connection with NIV2011, where in Philippians 1:4 adelphoi has been translated as "brothers and sisters." The CBT noted this as a misleading translation, as it does not do justice to the text's terminology of proclamation, and it undermines the proper understanding of who is eligible to serve as minister in the church. In the ESV, the term in question in Philippians 1:14 is translated as "the brothers."

With respect to 1 Timothy 3:11 in the NRSV, the CBT suggested that this text demonstrated the NRSV's bias in favour of women in office. The NRSV translation begins, "Women likewise..." while the text note says, "Or 'their wives' or 'women deacons.'" In the CBT Interim Report (2011), the NIV2011's translation of 1 Timothy 3:11 ("the women") was deemed to be an acceptable rendering of the original Greek *gune*. Additionally, the NIV2011 footnote to this text ("Possibly deacons' wives or women who are deacons") was considered by the CBT to be an improvement on the NIV1984, which had suggested "deaconesses" as an alternative translation for "their wives." In the ESV, 1 Timothy 3:11 is translated similarly to the NIV1984: "their wives." The ESV also includes a footnote that does not suggest any connection of the women to the aforementioned deacons, "'Wives, likewise, must,' or 'Women, likewise, must'".

With respect to Romans 16:1 in the NRSV, rendered "Phoebe, a deacon...", the CBT drew attention to the text note which says, "or minister." Also in the NIV2011, Phoebe is described as a "deacon," and there are two footnotes attached to this word. The first reads, "Or 'servant'." The second reads, "The word 'deacon' here refers to a Christian designated to serve with the overseers/elders of the church in a variety of ways; similarly in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8,12." Again, the previous CBT in its Interim Report (2011) evaluated the NIV2011 translation of this text, and the two footnotes. The CBT maintained that "servant" is the preferable translation of the Greek

diakonos in Romans 16:1, though "deaconess" could be acceptable here if it is understood as a woman assisting others in the church. The CBT also warned that by placing "deacon" in the text, relegating "servant" to the footnote, and also adding the second footnote, there exists in the NIV2011 a detrimental potential for identification between what is said about Phoebe and what is said about deacons in 1 Timothy 3. In the ESV of Romans 16:1, Phoebe is described as a "servant," with the text note indicating "or 'deaconess'".

Based on the above table (NRSV-NIV2011-ESV), and the comparison of the three additional texts pertaining to ecclesiastical office, we can make a few brief observations.

- In a few instances the NIV2011 incorporated gender-inclusive language in ways that were similar or identical to those changes in the NRSV (i.e., "brothers and sisters," "people"), while in other instances the NIV2011 did not adopt the entirely gender-neutral language of the NRSV (i.e., maintaining reference to "sonship," "son of man").
- 2) A few of the NRSV texts that were deemed to be problematic by the CBT in its 1992 report were considered to be acceptable by the CBT in its 2011 report (i.e., the translation of adelphoi in several places in the epistles; the translation of "women" in 1 Timothy 3:11).
- 3) In almost all instances it can be seen that the ESV has opted for what can be considered a less gender inclusive translation (e.g., consistent use of "brothers" to translate *adelphoi*).

# Conclusions on the CBT's Past Analysis of the NRSV

In its 1992 report, after citing numerous examples of what it described as the unjustified gender inclusive translations in the NRSV, the CBT speculated on the influence of the feminist agenda on the movement toward inclusive language in the NRSV: "The translation is no longer determined by what the text says, but by what certain people like to hear. Apparently feminists no longer want to listen to language that they perceive as male dominated and so the Word has to be purged from what is considered a male bias." This pointed observation was also quoted in the CBT's Interim Report (2011) to the churches on the NIV2011.

In our judgment this remains a valid and cautionary observation, and one that should be duly considered. We should be cognizant of the political and social agendas that are at play in matters of language and language usage. As has been well said, "Language not only reflects culture but creates culture. The feminist push for inclusive language is not intended simply to mirror the current state of the English language but to transform the language." However, even if there is an influence from feminist ideology on English usage, this does not mean that all gender inclusive language is thereby to be rejected. If a gender inclusive rendering of a passage more accurately conveys the author's intended meaning to the reader of Scripture (e.g., if a passage is clearly meant to apply to both men and women, to both "brothers and sisters"), then it is our view that such a rendering should be welcomed.

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The preceding review and consideration of the CBT report to Synod 1992 regarding the NRSV, while interesting, has not provided any compelling justification to reject a translation philosophy of Scripture which makes allowances for gender-inclusive language. Indeed, no English translation of Scripture can avoid the issue of how to translate texts that are meant to be general in reference. We would argue that the way in which different translations are gender-inclusive is a matter of degree, with some degrees being unacceptable in our judgment.

Finally, it should be noted that language usage has continued to undergo change in the twenty-plus years since the CBT issued its report on the NRSV. No language that is in current and widespread usage exists in a static state—and English is certainly no exception. It can be granted that in North American or Western culture, masculine terms previously understandable as generic in reference are no longer always understood as such. This disconnect in understanding is something that requires attention when texts from Scripture are taught or preached to a 21st century audience.

# 5. The ESV in Relation to the RSV

Because the ESV is a revision of the RSV, Synod also directed our committee to investigate "to what degree the concerns expressed by previous iterations of the CBT about the RSV remain a concern in relation to the ESV" (see 4.4.2).

Synod Chatham 2004 mandated CBT "to do a preliminary investigation of the ESV, and provide Synod 2007 with a report on the ESV translation, using also the input solicited from the churches." In seeking to fulfill this part of its mandate the CBT noted the following in its 2007 report to General Synod Smithers, "The ESV is a revision of the RSV and sees itself as 'carrying forward this legacy [of the RSV] for a new century." The committee, therefore, compared the ESV with the RSV, making use of the data and criteria found in the 1995 Report of the CBT. This report relies on two earlier evaluations of the RSV, the 1974 and 1977 CBT Reports."11

In Appendix A of the 2007 CBT report, the committee reached this conclusion about the 1974 report on the RSV and how the earlier concerns had been addressed: "In the sections considered, the ESV has in the main demonstrated a careful reconsideration of the RSV. It generally has a much better respect for the Masoretic Text than the RSV. 12 It also shows a greater respect for the personhood of the Holy Spirit as well as the divine nature of Christ. With regards to the unity of Scripture, in four of the five comparisons of OT texts and their NT quotations, the ESV is a marked improvement over the RSV. In one instance, however, it is actually worse than the RSV and demonstrates a certain carelessness with the Masoretic Text of the OT. Still, overall the ESV proves more faithful in preserving the unity of the Scriptures by translating the passages in question more consistently than the RSV."13

In the same appendix of the 2007 report, the committee came to a number of conclusions when it compared the ESV to the RSV. The committee noted that the ESV is stronger in two key areas: overall theology and principles of translation. It also concluded that the ESV displayed weaknesses in two key areas: problems inherited from the RSV and quality of translation.

In its 2007 report the CBT noted the following when comparing the ESV to the RSV. It noted that the ESV:

- establishes "the authentic Word of God more clearly to the reader"
- "recognizes the personhood of the Holy Spirit where the RSV did not"
- "has a much greater respect for Masoretic Text than does the RSV"
- "has a greater respect for the unity of Scripture" (note: this is highlighted with many texts in Appendix A Preliminary Study of ESV)
- "does not use 'thee' and 'thou' and thus avoids both unnecessary archaic terminology and issues surrounding the divinity of Christ"
- "shows a greater support for the divinity of our Lord"
- "is conscious of unscriptural, liberal influence in the RSV and in various places has removed it"
- "has removed confusing footnotes in the RSV"

The 2007 committee report concluded: "The ESV seems to show a much greater respect for the Bible as the Word of God than the RSV."14

Further, it should be noted that the previous CBT's Final Report to Synod 2013 included the results of its investigation into whether "any further CBT suggestions had been incorporated into the latest edition [2011] of the ESV." Only a few slight improvements to past editions of the ESV were noted in the 2011 FSV:

- 1 Samuel 13:1 still considered to be a confusing rendering, but the text footnote is more helpful
- 2 Chronicles 21:2 the 2011 ESV has improved on the RSV by preserving the Masoretic Text
- Hebrews 2:11 considered to be a slight improvement

Based on all of the above it would seem that previous iterations of the CBT, including the most recent, have done the work Synod Carman 2013 requested us to do as it relates to this part of our mandate. The areas of concern noted by previous iterations of the committee in relation to the RSV have been evaluated and the committee has concluded that "on balance, the ESV is the translation that is to be recommended to the churches." This was the recommendation that was adopted by Synod Carman.

# NOTES

NOTES	6. Readability of the ESV
	Objectively Evaluating Readability  In light of our mandate to provide a thorough study of the ESV wit special attention to its readability (4.4.2), we discussed at some length how to evaluate the readability of a Bible translation. To some extent this is subjective matter. Among other things, it depends on the education level of the one evaluating the translation, how much regular reading the evaluated does, and what kind of reading. What might be challenging for one reade might be relatively easy for another.  Our committee did some research into whether or not there are an useful objective standards for readability. It turns out that there are at leas seven widely-used readability formulas:
	<ol> <li>The Flesch Reading Ease Formula</li> <li>The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Formula</li> <li>The Fog Scale (Gunning Fog Formula)</li> <li>The SMOG Index</li> <li>The Coleman Liau Index</li> <li>Automated Readability Index</li> </ol>
	7. Linsear Write Formula  These can be used to determine the grade, difficulty, and age level of English prose texts. There is a website where one can input a text and a algorithm determines the consensus of these seven formulas. The websit is www.readabilityformulas.com. Our committee used this website to compare the ESV and 2011NIV on several texts. We chose 14 random prose texts from the Old Testament and New Testament from a variety of genres It is important to note that these are only prose texts. The readability formulas cannot be used to analyze poetry. Besides the random texts, we als analyzed Ephesians 1:3-14, a passage with notoriously difficult gramma. The results of our study are below:
	<ol> <li>Genesis 22:1-8</li> <li>ESV – Grade level 5, easy to read, 8-9 years old NIV – Grade level 5, easy to read, 8-9 years old</li> </ol>
	<ol> <li>Leviticus 14:1-9</li> <li>ESV – Grade level 8, easy to read, 12-14 years old NIV – Grade level 9, fairly easy to read, 13-15 years old</li> </ol>
	<ol> <li>Joshua 4:1-7</li> <li>ESV – Grade level 8, fairly easy to read, 12-14 years old NIV – Grade level 9, fairly easy to read, 13-15 years old</li> </ol>

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4.	1 Samuel 31:1-7	NOTES
	ESV – Grade level 8, fairly easy to read, 12-14 years old NIV – Grade level 9, fairly easy to read, 13-15 years old	
5.	Esther 9:1-5	
	ESV – Grade level 11, standard/average, 15-17 years old NIV – Grade level 10, standard/average, 14-15 years old	
6.	Ecclesiastes 9:1-6	
	ESV – Grade level 8, easy to read, 12-14 years old NIV – Grade level 9, fairly easy to read, 13-15 years old	
7.	Ezekiel 33:1-8	
	ESV – Grade level 11, fairly easy to read, 15-17 years old NIV – Grade level 12, fairly easy to read, 17-18 years old	
8.	Matthew 6:25-33	
	ESV – Grade level 6, easy to read, 10-11 years old NIV – Grade level 5, easy to read, 8-9 years old	
9.	Mark 12:1-9	
	ESV – Grade level 5, easy to read, 8-9 years old NIV – Grade level 5, easy to read, 8-9 years old	
10.	John 15:1-11	
	ESV – Grade level 5, easy to read, 8-9 years old NIV – Grade level 5, very easy to read, 8-9 years old	
11.	Acts 3:1-10	
	ESV – Grade level 7, fairly easy to read, 11-13 years old NIV – Grade level 6, easy to read, 10-11 years old	
12.	Romans 7:1-6	
	ESV – Grade level 9, fairly easy to read, 13-15 years old NIV – Grade level 10, fairly easy to read, 14-15 years old	
13.	Ephesians 1:3-14	
	ESV – Grade level 18, difficult to read, college graduate NIV – Grade level 13, fairly difficult to read, 18-19 years old (college level entry)	

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# 14. Hebrews 8:1-7

ESV – Grade level 11, standard/average, 15-17 years old NIV – Grade level 11, standard/average, 15-17 years old

# 15. Revelation 10:1-7

ESV – Grade level 10, fairly easy to read, 14-15 years old NIV – Grade level 7, easy to read, 11-13 years old

# Summary and Conclusion on Survey

- ESV average grade level 8.67
- NIV average grade level 8.33

We note that the ESV and NIV scored equally on four passages. NIV scored a higher reading level than ESV on six passages. ESV scored a higher reading level than NIV on five passages.

If we take Ephesians 1:3-14 out of the results, the two translations are actually equal in terms of grade level:

- ESV average grade level 8.00
- NIV average grade level 8.00

We were initially surprised by this result. The impression many seem to have is that the ESV is significantly less readable than the NIV. However, our research above does not bear this out. Furthermore, we discovered a chart published by Zondervan (the publisher of the NIV) which confirmed our findings.<sup>17</sup> According to Zondervan, the NIV is at a grade 7.8 reading level, while the ESV is at 7.4. They are close, but the ESV is marginally easier.

It has been noted before that the ESV is essentially a light overhaul of the RSV. In 1995 when a previous CBT recommended the 1984 NIV to the churches, it was noted that "the NIV is in many respects very close to the RSV." The same report quoted Robert G. Bratcher, "The NIV is closer in style and form to the RSV than to any other English version.... The principles that guided it in textual, exegetical, linguistic and stylistic matters are hardly distinguishable from those which guided the RSV." Our research shows that, in terms of readability, what was true of the RSV vis-à-vis the NIV. remains true of the ESV.

# Some Specific Passages with Readability Issues

While the overall picture of the readability of the ESV is good, some scholars have identified particular problem areas. There are specific passages where the ESV has room for improvement in terms of readability. In this section we will identify some of those passages and provide proposals for how these might be improved. Some of these passages have been identified as being problematic by Mark Strauss in an article entitled "Why the English Standard Version Should Become the Standard English Version."<sup>20</sup> Other passages were noted by Allan Chapple in a 2003 article in *Reformed Theo-*

*logical Review*, "The English Standard Version: A Review Article."<sup>21</sup> Other passages come from our own reading and study of the ESV.

We should state at the outset that a degree of subjectivity cannot be avoided here either, especially when the passages under consideration are poetic in nature. Poetry is an elevated form of writing and poets often use words and phrases that might not otherwise be used in normal discourse. We see this even in the latest edition of our *Book of Praise* and its psalms and hymns. Moreover, there are other places in Scripture where an elevated form of writing found in the original would be expected to be reflected in a translation. We think, for example, of the polished Greek used by Luke in parts of his gospel and Acts. To ask (as Strauss does) whether a contemporary English speaker would use this or that phrase is to miss the distinct literary character of much of the Bible. With these caveats in mind, we cannot expect all readers of this report to agree with our evaluation of every passage identified as being problematic, and likely other readers would want more passages added.

Unclear Passages or Potential for Misunderstanding

# Joshua 6:26

Joshua **laid an oath on them** at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho."

The Hebrew means to impose a curse. "To lay an oath" on someone is not clear in English.

We propose: "Joshua pronounced a curse at that time..."

# Proverbs 30:25,26

...the ants are **a people not strong**, yet they provide their food in summer

The rock badgers are **a people not mighty**, vet they make their homes in the cliffs:

The problem here should be self-evident. It is odd to describe ants and badgers as "people."

We propose: "species" in the place of "people" in these verses.

# 2 Kings 7:3

Now there were four men who were lepers at the entrance to the gate. And they said to one another, "Why are we sitting here until we die?"

Were they only lepers at the entrance to the gate? This could be clearer. We propose: "Now there were four leprous men at the entrance to the gate..."

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NOTES	1 Chronicles 28:19
	"All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan."
	Newer editions of the ESV have added quotation marks with this verse to indicate that someone is saying this, but it is still not immediately clear who is saying it. While this translation is faithful to the Hebrew text, we propose that readers would be served by adding at the verse's beginning, "David said."
	 Romans 14:22
	The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.
	Are Christians to keep their faith to themselves and not share it? The Greek word translated as "faith" has a broader range of meaning that includes "conviction." We propose: "The conviction that you have"
	Galatians 6:12
	It is those who want <b>to make a good showing in the flesh</b> who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.
	The expression in bold here is not clear. The idea here is that that the Judaizers are all about impressing others with outward appearances. We propose: "It is those who want to make an external show"
	Psalm 94:9
	He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?
	This is an overly literal translation of the Hebrew. This word can also be used metaphorically to describe the creation of something. We propose: "He who shaped the ear"
	Idiom Problems
	<u>Joshua 10:6</u>
	And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, "Do not relax your hand from your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the hill country are gathered against us."
	What the men of Gibeon mean is "do not abandon us." Our English translation should reflect the meaning of this idiom. We propose: "Do not abandon your servants"

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Judges 15:8  And he struck them <b>hip and thigh</b> with a great blow, and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam.	NOTES
Compare NIV, "He attacked them viciously" and even NASB, "And he struck them ruthlessly" It is true that the idiom used here is not entirely clear. <i>The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery</i> states, "To 'smite hip and thigh' is a particularly vigorous form of attack" (500). Commentator Daniel I. Block ( <i>The New American Commentary</i> ) notes that it is "a wrestling idiom for total victory." We propose: "And he struck them viciously"	
Psalm 22:7	
All who see me mock me;	
they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;	
In English, we make faces at people. The Hebrew idiom is close, but our translation should be clearer. The idea is that of a contemptuous gesture with the mouth. We propose: "they sneer at me"	
<u>Psalm 10:4</u>	
In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God."	
While the meaning might be worked out with some thought, it is not immediately obvious. We propose: "In his pride the wicked does not seek him" With this verse we note that the ESV offers an alternative translation of the word "face" in the footnotes. It is true that this word can be translated as "anger." We therefore also propose an alternative reading for the footnotes: "In his angry pride the wicked does not seek him"	
Lexical Issues	
Matthew 2:23	
And he went and lived in <b>a city called Nazareth</b> , so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.	

The Greek word translated as "city" here can also be translated as "town" or "village." At the time of Jesus' birth, Nazareth was certainly not what we commonly think of as a city. We propose: "And he went and lived

in a town called Nazareth..."

NOTES	Word Order Issues
	<u>Luke 22:29</u>
	and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom,
	The word order in this translation follows the original Greek closely. However, the English word order could definitely use some improvement. The ESV could take a hint here not only from translations like the NIV, but also the KJV and NASB. We propose: "And I assign to you a kingdom, just as my Father assigned one to me"
	 Conclusion
	From the foregoing it is clear that that the ESV still needs improvement in some areas related to readability. In keeping with 4.4.3 of our mandate, we have forwarded the results of this study to the ESV Translation Oversight Committee. Since the committee has stated that it is open to receiving critical feedback, we hope that it will take our comments to heart and incorporate our proposed changes in a future revision of the ESV.
	7. Feedback from the Churches
	Our committee was mandated to solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV, to submit worthy translation changes to the ESV editorial committee and to monitor the response (see 4.4.3). In early 2015 we wrote a letter to all the churches inviting feedback on the use of the ESV. The committee has received correspondence from two churches. Both churches complained about the readability of the ESV while advocating for the use of the NIV2011. Regarding the readability of the ESV these churches were referred to the contents of this report. The churches were also informed that further consideration of the NIV2011 is beyond our current mandate.
	8. Interaction with the CBTNIV
	Synod directed our committee to correspond with the CBTNIV (see 4.4.4). We were to send the critical remarks and suggestions for improvement on the five texts that pertained to women in office, as these texts were discussed in our Interim report (December 2011). Anticipating this aspect of the mandate, our committee sent the Interim Report in its entirety to the CBTNIV in April of 2012. To date, no interaction from the CBTNIV has been received.

9. Recommendations  The committee recommends that General Synod 2016 reappoint the Committee for Bible Translation, and to mandate the CBT:	NOTES
to solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV;	
<ol> <li>to submit worthy translation changes to the ESV editorial committee;</li> </ol>	
<ol> <li>to prepare and distribute a report to the churches in advance of the next Synod.</li> </ol>	
In Christ's service,	
P. Aasman (convenor) D. de Boer	
R. Vermeulen	
<sup>1</sup> "Inclusive-masculine" is a term for words such as "man" or "mankind" when they are used for a group that includes males and females. <sup>2</sup> The word "he" is sometimes used in the English language for situations that might apply to either a man or a woman. Example, "when someone crosses the street, he should look both ways." <sup>3</sup> Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995, Appendix III, Section 2.4.2.v., "The NIV undoubtedly has dynamic equivalent elements within it, as do other translations (cf. Appendix 3, section 2.1 and 2.3), but again this does not make it a dynamic equivalent translation. Rather than belong in Beekman and Callow's category of unacceptable types (unduly free), the NIV really has to be placed in the category of the acceptable types (modified literal or idiomatic)." <sup>4</sup> Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (3d ed., rev. and tr. Frederick William Danker; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000). <sup>5</sup> W.A. Grudem and V.S. Poythress, The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy:	
Muting the Masculinity of God's Word. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000. A shorter summary of the concerns raised in <i>The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy</i> can be found under the title "An Evaluation of Gender Language in the 2011 Edition of the NIV Bible" on the website www.waynegrudem.com <sup>6</sup> "Complementarian" is a term widely used to summarize the view that God created man and women equal but with different gifts suitable to the complementary but different tasks assigned to them.	
<sup>7</sup> "Egalitarian" is a term widely used to describe the view that God created men and women to be equal in every way. In effect, this means that the duties of leadership and authority in the family and the church are not exclusively assigned to men. <sup>8</sup> Acts Synod Lincoln 1992, 251. <sup>9</sup> Acts 1992, 251.	

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	NOTES	<ul> <li>Mark L. Strauss, <i>Distorting Scripture?</i> (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998), 203.</li> <li>Reports to General Synod Smithers 2007, vol. 2, 216.</li> <li>The term <i>Masoretic Text</i> refers to the authoritative Hebrew text of the Old Testament. The Masoretic Text was primarily copied, edited and distributed by a group of Jews known as the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries AD.</li> <li>Reports to General Synod Smithers 2007, vol. 2, 231.</li> <li>This material was summarized in the CBT's Final Report to General Synod Carman 2013.</li> <li>Reports to General Synod Carman 2013, vol. 2, 163.</li> <li>Ibid, 164.</li> <li>This chart is available online here: http://www.canrc.org/?document=8224</li> <li>CBT Report to General Synod Abbotsford 1995, 33.</li> <li>CBT Report to General Synod Abbotsford 1995, 41.</li> <li>This article can be found online here (as of October 2014): http://zondervan.typepad.com/files/improvingesv2.pdf</li> <li>This article can be found online here (as of October 2014): http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/wp-content/uploads/2004/03/306-chapple-esv.pdf.</li> </ul>

# Reports to General Synod Dunnville 2016

The 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

# **NOTES**

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:

- 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;
- 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

NOTES				

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):

- 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.
- 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):

- 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.	NOTES
	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.	
Red	commendation:	
	t the mandate, as stated by Synod 2010, be continued for the CNA until 2019.	
Sul	pcommittee 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 80 <sup>th</sup> 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 Reformée du Québec (ERQ) Report 2 - The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)	

3.

# 4. Subcommittee West NOTES 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) 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-theday 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)

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NOTES	7. Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin)  As per the third point of our mandate ( <i>To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in the Americas</i> ), Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer responded to a request to attend the 30 <sup>th</sup> 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:	Subcommittee West:
	E. Kampen (Orangeville, ON)	P.H. Holtvlüwer (Tintern, ON)
	C. Poppe (Guelph, ON)	J. Poppe (Winnipeg, MB)
	D. Vandeburgt (Langley, BC)	H. Van Delden (Winnipeg, MB)
	G. Bos (Guelph, ON)	L. VanderVeen (Carman, MB)
	Appended Reports  1. L'Église Reformée 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 Reformée du Québec (ERQ)

# **NOTES**

# 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 reformée 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).

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NOTES

# 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 FRQ 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. Holtvlüwer, 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

# NOTES

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.

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NOTES	3.3 November 12, 2014  Present for this mee Collet and for the Ca C. Poppe, H. van E were discussed: 3.3.2 Update on Ge
	A proposal by t ings of the Scr and the interpre the Ministerial (
	3.3.3 Marriage vows
	At the ERQ syr presented a mo St-Marc church of Praise of the vows contain a promise to love Church and gar love and respective.
	porated into a F that the CanRC  4. Attendance at Synoo
	4.1. Synod of Novembe
	Br. C. Poppe attende béc City. We highlig
	4.1.1 Songs for Chil
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	the church at R to all churches.
	4.1.2 Creation
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	Bédard. These further discussion

eting for the ERQ were Rev. B. Westerveld and V. anRC G. Bos, Rev. P. Holtvlüwer, Rev. E. Kampen, Delden and L. Vanderveen. The following matters

### nesis 1&2 and Creation in the ERO

the St-Marc ERQ to outline and affirm the teachriptures and the Confessions regarding creation etation of Genesis 1 and 2 had been referred to Committee of the FRQ churches for review.

nod held on May 10, 2014 the Church at St-Marc odification to the "Marriage Vows adopted by the ". The vows are similar to those found in the Book CanRC published in 2013 (see page 630). The dditional clauses such as (for the bridegroom) "I e and honour you as Jesus Christ has loved the ve his life for her", and for the bride "I promise to ct you as the Church loves and submits to Jesus CNA delegates asked if the vows would be incorform for the Solemnization of Marriage and noted have a very biblical form for that purpose.

### ds of the ERQ

### er 2. 2013

ed this Synod convened at l'Église St-Marc at Queht the following from his report:

### dren

ée de la Rive-Sud has established a committee of mbers of the church), who under the supervision of the church, plan to compose Christian songs dren that would help them to memorise the Westr Catechism. The program is called "gamal mu-". The proposal was discussed at some length to nce of the texts to the Scriptures, supervision by ive-Sud, and to ensure that it would be beneficial All churches supported the program.

presentations on the topic of creation, one on "The n: a second look at Scriptures" by Rev. Zoellner, n "Literary framework or six 24-hour days" by Rev. presentations were meant to provide a context for ons 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".

### NOTES

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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 NOTES

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

- 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

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NOTES	4.	ERQ churches since Synod A sions related be summarized that reads, in table of our Lo supervise its ent practice of communion of tion and warre the congrega professed the they have be visitors, the strequiring a will worship service. Reports to Geochurches in the members diversity of care converts a Baptist or Echallenges to the ERQ churchey cover the since of the transport of transport of the transport of the transport of the transport of transport of the transport of the transport of the transport of transport of the transport of
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	1.	To thank the I the ERQ.
	2.	To mandate t Fellowship wi
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es. This topic has been raised at every CanRC Synod Abbotsford (1995), the first Synod that discussed submisto the ERQ. The response of the ERQ can perhaps best ed by quoting the CCCA report to Synod Smithers (2007) part, that "The ERQ agrees that we must not profane the ord, and consequently, the elders of the local church must administration". The report further notes that "The presof the ERQ congregations involves celebrating monthly during which the pastor addresses a clear verbal invitaning to all those who are present. Baptised members of tion are not received at the Lord's Table until they have eir faith. Excommunicated members are not received until en restored through public confession. With respect to ame verbal invitation and warning are addressed without ritten attestation. In some of our congregations, a followth respect to those visitors who attend more regularly the ce concerning their participation at the Lord's Table" (see eneral Synod Smithers 2007. Committee for Contact with he Americas (CCCA), page 124).

ship of the ERQ churches is small (about 350) and the hurch members is considerable. Most of the members from Roman Catholicism whereas other members have vangelical background. Such diversity causes significant the Reformed Churches in Québec. The resources of rches with respect to people and finances are limited. e prayers of fellow-believers and thankfully receive their ent and financial support.

### tions

mmends that Synod decide:

- Lord for the faithful Reformed witness provided in and by
- the CCCNA to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical th the ERQ under the adopted rules.
- ternal delegates in discussions at Synod in such a way as sister to sister church relationship.
- mandate the CCCNA to specifically deal with items that oroughly discussed and reported on since the establishct with the ERQ in 1995.
- both the autonomy of the ERQ as a sister church and its gile condition as a young Reformed church in a spiritually nment.
- e the churches to support the ERQ churches prayerfully financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects.

### Report 2. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

### NOTES

### 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 82<sup>nd</sup> (2015) General Assemblies.

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

3.3.	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.  2 Report on study committee for the republication of the covenant	NOTES
	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 con-	
	flict 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.

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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 interchurch 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;	NOTES
<ul> <li>It was reinforced to us that the OPC takes the missionary calling of the church very seriously. This serves as an example to us;</li> </ul>	
There was much evidence that the OPC takes the holiness of the con-	
gregation and the importance of vows made by members and office bearers very seriously in dealing with ministers and members who de- viate in doctrine or life;	
<ul> <li>In dealing with appeals it was clear that the OPC seeks to do justice to them;</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Giving a face to the Canadian Reformed Churches once again strength- ened the bond between the OPC and the CanRC as there were oppor- tunities to answer questions about the CanRC.</li> </ul>	
The Lord willing, we will attend the 83 <sup>rd</sup> 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 83 <sup>rd</sup> 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 Car-	
man, 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:	
<b>6.1</b> To thank the LORD for the way in which the OPC actively provides a faithful Reformed witness to the gospel.	
<b>6.2</b> To mandate the CCCNA to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC under the adopted rules.	
<b>6.3</b> 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).	
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### 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  $270^{th}$ ) 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.

### **NOTES**

### 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*.

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- 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.	NOTES
<ul> <li>4. Attendance at General Synods:         CCCNA delegates attended the annual general synods of the RCUS in 2014 and 2015.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	
4.2 269 <sup>th</sup> 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.

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### 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.reformed-presbyterianchurch.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;

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- 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.
- 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

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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 share in the ruling/governing of the church, with only a lesser "administrative" authority.

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.

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

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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)."

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 be-
cause 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 Testimonv:

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).

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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!

### 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 RPC-NA'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 Interchurch 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 con fessions need to serve the members of the church. Thus, along side their Confession of faith, in a parallel column, the RPCNA ha adopted the Testimony as part of the Constitution of their church At times the Testimony simply restates the main point of the WC in more simple language. Yet that is not all that the Testimon 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 oppose the theory of evolution, something that was not an issue when th confessions were written. When speaking about God's providence it details how gambling is a sin and warns against a variety of dif ferent forms of gambling. These are but two simple examples. Ye throughout, the Testimony gives evidence of a deep understandin 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 docu ment that we can learn from.

From this one could conclude that the Testimony is merely an in terpretive lens through which the Westminster Confession is read

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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 gueries 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

- 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.
- 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.
- B. 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.
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- 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.
- 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:

- To express gratitude to the Lord for the positive developments within our contact with the RPCNA:
- 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:
- 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.
- That the nature and status of the Testimony have been sufficiently investigated and do not present an obstacle to the establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship.
- 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.

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### 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-commitee 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.

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### 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;
- 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 ser-

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- vice, 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)

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### 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Chicago, II. 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. 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
<ol> <li>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).</li> </ol>
<ol> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>
5. Recommendations
The Committee recommends that Synod decide:
<ol> <li>To express gratitude to the Lord for the establishment of contact with the KPCA (Kosin),</li> </ol>
<ul><li>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.</li></ul>
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)	NOTES
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:	
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. ( <i>Acts of Synod Carman 2013</i> , 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 <i>confessional</i> position as well as a clearly-artic-	
ulated rule in our <i>church polity</i> . 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 authorita-	

tive (including in a ruling capacity) and restricted to males.

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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)<sup>5</sup>, 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 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.

### 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." 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.<sup>8</sup>

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."

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. 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.

### Continental Settledness on Deacons

Since the late 16<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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 OPC<sup>12</sup> and the PCA<sup>13</sup> do not permit women to be ordained as deacons while the ARP14 and the RPCNA do.15

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. 16 Those faithful churches of the Continental Reformed tradition 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.

### 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." 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. <sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

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 Calvin<sup>20</sup> 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." Here, in a spirit of brotherly concern, 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 guestion of women deacons.

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### 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  $\delta \mbox{i}\alpha'$  kovov (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.<sup>22</sup>

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.<sup>23</sup> 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 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.<sup>24</sup>

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?

### 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 <u>have responsibility for</u> 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; <u>emphasis</u> 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.<sup>25</sup> [Emphasis part of the quoted material]

From this we understand that the RPCNA distinguishes between a *ruling* authority and a *serving* 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, αὐθεντεῖν (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 (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)

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### Appendix 2 – RPCNA Letter of Response re: Women Deacons NOTES 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. 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 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."<sup>29</sup> Due to the debate over the minority's points, a committee formulated two statements reported on December 19, 1643:

The office of a deacon is perpetual in the church. I Tim. iii. 8, Rom. xii.
 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.<sup>30</sup>

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 lookes to them [the poor] not as the distressed members of Christ. Human charity and christian charity [are] very different."<sup>31</sup> 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).<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup>

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 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.<sup>35</sup>

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.<sup>36</sup> The author of the first article written given to the discussion of the congregation's

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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 PRESBYTERI-AN 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 . . ."

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 guestion 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 If 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 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.<sup>48</sup>

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.<sup>49</sup> 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

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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*).<sup>50</sup> 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."<sup>51</sup>

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 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." 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." 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."

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." 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.

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.<sup>58</sup>

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 yuvαĵκας 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

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 γυναικὶ 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 ώσαύτως – women likewise ("their" is not in the Greek text, thus mitigating against understanding  $\Gamma \nu \nu \alpha \tilde{\imath} \kappa \alpha \varsigma$  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.

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.

NOTES	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

**NOTES** 

[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 NOTES 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).

NOTES	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.
	<ul> <li>Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful summary of Scripture's teaching on limited atonement and the calling to spread the gospel indiscriminately.</li> </ul>
	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).
	<ul> <li>Conclusion: The Testimony provides a faithful summary of Scripture's doctrine of justification.</li> </ul>
	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
	<ul> <li>Conclusion: The Testimony makes a clear and helpful distinction be- tween justification and sanctification which is faithful to Scripture.</li> </ul>
	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 NOTES 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 wor-

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.

ship (Ch.21. 9). The Testimony specifies that "worship in small groups is

also encouraged by the Scripture" (Ch.21.10).

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 guestion 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 wit-

nesses 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 officebearers, 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.

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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.

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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

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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

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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 <i>bind</i> member churches to a <i>decision</i> 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 re-worded in such a way as to take away the tension (perceived or real) between itself and Article 4.		NOTES	
Brothers, once again thank you for you Committee for Contact with Churche On behalf of the Canadian Reformed	s Abroad via its Subcommittee West		
P.H. Holtvlüwer Chairman	H. van Delden Corresponding Secretary		

NOTES	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 <i>Constitution</i> and <i>Bylaws</i> 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 <i>Constitution</i> and <i>Bylaws</i> ; 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.	NOTES
2.	Inclusion of a Public Service for the Worship of God ( <i>Bylaws</i> I.1). We	
۷.	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 amend-	
	ment includes the word "ordinarily," which we hope would, among other	
	things, respect the consciences of sessions/consistories of local con-	
	gregations 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 Commit-	
	tee (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 Com-	
	mittee is united in the conviction that any proposal for one Member	
	Church to begin a process of uniting organically with another Mem-	
	ber 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 Or-	
	ganic 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 By-	
	laws 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:

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- 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, er-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: if 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.

Mark T. Bube

FOR THE NAPARC COMMITTEE OF REVIEW

NOT	ES

## Appendix 8 – Revised Constitution of the North American NOTES **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 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. 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.

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

- 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.

## **NOTES**

NOTES	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
	<ol> <li>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.</li> <li>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</li> </ol>
	<ul> <li>date, and the place for the next meeting.</li> <li>3. All meetings shall be open, except when the Council decides to meet in Executive Session.</li> </ul>
	II. DELEGATES AND VOTING
	<ol> <li>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.</li> </ol>
	<ol> <li>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.</li> </ol>
	3. Except as otherwise provided herein, a (simple) majority vote in the affirmative adopts any motion.
	III. OFFICERS OF THE COUNCIL
	<ol> <li>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</li> </ol>

2.			ncil determines to conduct an election. consibilities of the Officers will be as follows:	NOTES
			irman	
	a.			
			preside at meetings of the Council	
		` ,	make required appointments	
			see that business is conducted in an orderly manner	
		. ,	conduct, with the Vice-Chairman, the annual internal audit of the Council's accounts and report the results to the Council.	
	b.	Vice	e-Chairman	
		(1)	assist the Chairman upon his request	
			succeed to the chairmanship at the next annual meeting after the election of Officers	
			conduct, with the Chairman, the annual internal audit of the Council's accounts and report the results to the Council.	
	C.	Sec	retary	
		(1)	prepare and present to the Interim Committee ( <i>Bylaws</i> , 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 <i>Minutes</i> 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 Observ-	
		(0)	ers ( <i>Bylaws</i> , VII.1) and Other Guests ( <i>Bylaws</i> , 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 <i>Minutes</i> 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 re-	
		(10)	gard to inquiries from the public, to the work of the Council (and its Committees and Conferences), and to the next	
			meeting of the Council	

NOTES		
		d.
	3.	Te
		a.

- (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, By-laws*, 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

- 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).

## 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.	NOTES
	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.	ITEN	MS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL	
1.	The	e 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.	
3.	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 ( <i>Bylaws</i> , IV.1.e and VI.4.b).  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 Commit-	
		tee)	
		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	
		<ul> <li>X. Discussion Regarding Progress Towards Organic Union (as proposed by the Interim Committee)</li> </ul>	
		XI. Treasurer's Report	

NOTES	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
	<ul> <li>* This is a time when the Delegates assemble to share reports</li> </ul>
	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 <i>Informational Documents</i> . 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.
	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/

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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** NOTES 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. Its functions shall be limited to those specified below: b. make the arrangements for the meeting of the Council c. 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) d. call meetings of the Council or of the Operating or Study Committees when unusual circumstances warrant e. give counsel to the Secretary regarding correspondence and procedure, and review his annual report deal responsibly with all matters inadvertently overlooked which call for action before the next meeting of the Council 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 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 se-

lected alphabetically from the List of NAPARC Member

NOTES	other than the Committee the Chairmater or (ii) if the the approvation informal except tary—but or or to the mater whether by the next me	Churches, with a view to his serving as Chairman of the next year's meeting), Secretary, and Treasurer propose to the Chairman nominations for the members (and chairman) of each Operating Committee 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 propose to the Council a budget for the following year including such honoraria as it deems appropriate extend invitations to non-Member Churches that adop the basis of the fellowship of NAPARC (Constitution, II) to send (at their own expense) Official Observers (Bylaws VII.1) to the next meeting extend invitations to other non-Member Churches to send (at their own expense) observers (as "Other Guests," By laws, VII.2) to the next meeting 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 beer 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).  Somes necessary for the Interim Committee to act at a time that of its usual time of meeting (Bylaws, VI.2), the Interim is authorized: (i) to meet by conference call, at the call of an and/or the Secretary, to take the necessary action(s) matter is primarily of an administrative nature (including all of a Press Release), to take the necessary action by archange of email initiated by the Chairman and/or the Secretary in the reproposed action itself aking of the decision by such procedure. All such actions conference call or by email exchange, shall be reported to eting of the Council.
	VII. OFFICIAL O	DBSERVERS AND OTHER GUESTS
	Churches th	ervers are duly appointed representatives of non-Member nat adopt the basis of fellowship of NAPARC ( <i>Constitution</i>

				12	
2.	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.  All persons present for the meeting who are neither Delegates nor Official Observers ( <i>Bylaws</i> , 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.				
VII	l. FII	NANCES			
Co pol	er re unci icies	e Council shall establish a Treasury, into which all assessments and eceipts shall be deposited, and out of which, all expenses of the I shall be paid or reimbursed in accordance with the actions and sof the Council.			
1.		sessments			
	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.	Со	uncil 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:			
		<ol> <li>costs of travel or accommodations to attend the meeting of the Council;</li> </ol>			
		<ul><li>(2) expenses of Official Observers or Other Guests (except as provided in 2.a.(1), above);</li></ul>			
		(3) expenses of spouses of Delegates, Official Observers, and Other Guests (except as provided in 2.a.(1), above).			
3.	Oth	ner Expenses. The Treasury shall also bear the expenses for:			
	(1)	all honoraria approved by the Council;			

(2) meetings of the Interim Committee;

NOTES	<ul><li>(3) meetings of Operating Committees, Facilitating Committees, and Study Committees;</li></ul>
	<ul> <li>(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;</li> </ul>
	(5) other items included in the budget approved by the Council.
	IX. INFORMATIONAL DOCUMENTS
	The Council will maintain a collection of its <i>Informational Documents</i> which might be useful to the Member Churches in pursuing the dual purposes for which the Council was established ( <i>Constitution</i> , 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 <i>List of NAPARC Member Churches</i> (which may be amended only as provided for in <i>Constitution</i> , VI.4). Included in the collection are the following:
	List of NAPARC Member Churches
	2. Suggested Form for Member Church Reports (2013)
	3. Suggested Orders of the Day for the Annual Meeting (2012)
	<ul> <li>4. Suggested Structure for Conferences (1976)</li> </ul>
	<ol> <li>List of NAPARC Operating and Study Committees (with their respective mandates)</li> </ol>
	6. List of NAPARC Consultations
	7. Definition of Organic Union (2003)
	<ul> <li>8. Chart of Similarities and Differences Among the NAPARC Member Churches (including 2007 updates)</li> </ul>
	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
	<ul> <li>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.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 10 Brief History of the KPCA (Kosin)

## **NOTES**

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

NOTES	

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 30<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of KPCA (Kosin)

**NOTES** 

Note: The General Assembly was held in Chicago, II, 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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.

# NOTES

## **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 there were 130 congregations, mostly small, with a total estimated church membership of 5,000-6,000.

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

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NOTES	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				
	<ol> <li>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.</li> </ol>				
	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.				
	<ol> <li>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).</li> </ol>				
	Respectfully submitted to the CCCNA,				
	Peter H. Holtvlüwer				

	pendix 12 Report on Meeting with the IRC of the KPCA (Kosin) NAPARC 2014	NOTES
	te: This meeting was held on Wednesday, November 12, 2014 in Grass- Ontario.	
Re	esent were: presenting KPCA (Kosin):     Rev. James Alderman, and Rev. Young J. Woo presenting CanRC:     Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer, Rev. Eric Kampen, Mr. Les Vanderveen, Mr. Cornelius (Case) Poppe, Mr. Henry Vandelden, and Mr. Gerrit Bos.	
1. 2.	Peter Holtvlüwer opened the meeting with prayer 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 <i>Acts of General Synod Carman 2013</i> 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	

NOTES	<sup>1</sup> 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."
	- <sup>2</sup> Testimony, Chap. 25.8.
	<sup>3</sup> These statistics were reported by the KPCA (Kosin) to NAPARC 2014.
	<sup>4</sup> From the version of the Belgic Confession found in the <i>Book of Praise</i> 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".
	<sup>5</sup> All article references are taken from the version of the Church Order of Dort adopted
	by the Canadian Reformed Churches and found in the <i>Book of Praise</i> (see earlier citation), p.629 and following. An electronic copy can be found at www.canrc.org under the
	tab, "The Federation".
	6 Calvin, John, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> edited by John T. McNeill (Philadel-
	phia: Westminster Press, 1960) p.1061 (4.3.9).
	<ul> <li>Quoted in Peter Y. DeJong, <i>Ministry of Mercy for Today</i> (Grand Rapids: Baker Book</li> </ul>
	House, 1963) p.242.
	8 lbid., p.242.
	9 lbid., p.242.
	<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.243. This information plus that in the rest of the paragraph is taken from this
	Source.
	<sup>11</sup> 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.
	<sup>12</sup> Orthodox Presbyterian Church <i>Form of Government</i> , Chap. 25, part 1.
	<sup>13</sup> Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church of America, Chap. 9-4 and 7-2.
	<sup>14</sup> Book of Church Order of the Associate Reformed and Presbyterian Church, Chap.
	_ 7.A.1&2.
	<sup>15</sup> 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.
	<sup>17</sup> See p.2-3 of the cited Report, under "The Second Proposal"
	<sup>18</sup> Calvin derived his teaching on two orders of deacons from Romans 12:8 as cited
	earlier in footnote #3.
	Adopted Report of Synod 2001, p.3.
	<sup>20</sup> 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.
	<sup>22</sup> Book of Praise, p.613.
	23 Essay on Ordination by Pastor Jeff Stivason as attached to the Adopted Report of Synod 2001.
	24 Christian Adjemian in ibid., p.10.
	<sup>25</sup> Adopted Report of Synod 2001, p.2.
	<sup>26</sup> 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.

<ul> <li>Letter, p. 6.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Ibid, 116.</li> </ul>	NOTES
<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 117. <sup>31</sup> Ibid, 117.	
<ul> <li><sup>32</sup> Ibid, 123.</li> <li><sup>33</sup> The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, The Direc-</li> </ul>	
tory for Church Government, "The Officers of the Church," Chapter 3, p. D-8.  34 Spear, 116.	
<ul> <li>Spear, Op Cite, 120.</li> <li>The matter of a congregation electing a woman deacon was brought to Synod by the</li> </ul>	
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 <i>Reformed Presbyterian and Cov-</i>	
enanter, October 1888, Vol. XXVI, No. 10, pp. 357-359, and the other article, "Women and the Deacon's Office" appears in <i>Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter</i> , November	
1888, Vol. XXVI, No. 11, pp. 383-407. <sup>37</sup> Rev. D.S. Faris, "The Female Deacon and the Sentimental Overflow of Synod," Re-	
formed Presbyterian and Covenanter, October 1888, Vol. XXVI, No. 10, p. 357.	
<ul> <li>Faris, p. 359.</li> <li>Faris, p. 357.</li> </ul>	
<sup>40</sup> Faris, p. 357.	
<sup>41</sup> Faris, p. 358. <sup>42</sup> Faris, p. 358.	
43 Small Committee, "Women and the Deacon's Office," <i>Reformed Presbyterian and</i>	
Covenanter, November 1888, Vol. XXVI, No. 11, p. 383.	
44 Small Committee, p. 384. 45 Small Committee, p. 384.	
<sup>46</sup> Small Committee, p. 384.	
<sup>47</sup> Small Committee, p. 385.	
<ul> <li>Small Committee, p. 385.</li> <li>Small Committee, p. 385.</li> </ul>	
<sup>50</sup> Small Committee, pp. 385-386.	
<sup>51</sup> Small Committee, p. 386.	
<ul> <li>Small Committee, p. 386.</li> <li>Small Committee, p. 387.</li> </ul>	
<sup>54</sup> Small Committee, p. 387.	
55 Small Committee, p. 387.	
<sup>56</sup> Small Committee, pp. 387-388.	
<ul> <li>57 Small Committee, p. 388.</li> <li>58 Small Committee, p. 389.</li> </ul>	
<sup>59</sup> Small Committee, p. 399.	
<sup>60</sup> Small Committee, p. 392.	
<sup>61</sup> Small Committee, p. 399.	
<sup>62</sup> 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.	
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# Reports to General Synod Dunnville 2016

# REPORT OF THE COORDINATORS FOR THE COMMITTEE FOR CHURCH UNITY (CCU)

# REPORT OF THE COORDINATORS FOR THE COMMITTEE FOR CHURCH UNITY (CCU)

## **NOTES**

## To: General Synod Dunnville 2016

## Mandate

General Synod Carman 2013 gave the coordinators of the CCU the following mandate:

- 1. To discuss with CERCU the areas of concern or fear in the URCNA that seem to be hindering progress toward a merger with the CanRC;
- To seek ways to facilitate the work of building unity on the local level, as well as visiting churches and classes of the URCNA, particularly in the United States;
- To mandate the coordinators to discuss with CERCU how to make preparations for Phase 3, such as through the reappointment of the subcommittees for theological education, liturgical forms and confessions and a common songbook;
- 4. To seek clarification from CERCU on the authoritative status and definitions of the different categories of doctrinal statements adopted by recent URCNA synods and to encourage the URCNA to refrain from making further statements of this nature.

(Acts of General Synod Carman 2013, Article 129, p. 161)

## **Activities**

- In May of 2013, Rev. W. den Hollander was invited by several URCNA churches in Iowa to preach and make presentations to the congregations about the CanRC. He preached in Rock Valley IA on Ascension Day and did a presentation to the congregation. On Sunday, May 12, he preached in Sanborn IA and Orange City IA, doing presentations to each of these congregations.
- 2. On Sept 18, 2013, Rev. W. den Hollander and Rev. C.J. VanderVelde met to discuss the mandate given by General Synod Carman 2013 as well as what we would talk about with the URCNA's Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) at the occasion of the annual meeting of NAPARC in Flat Rock, North Carolina.
- 3. Rev. C.J. VanderVelde attended Classis Ontario-East September 26, 2013 held in Toronto, ON and brought fraternal greetings.
- 4. Rev. W. den Hollander attended Classis Michigan October 8, 2013 and brought fraternal greetings, being invited to do so. After his presentation there was time for questions from the floor of Classis. A ministerial luncheon had also been organized for Rev. den Hollander to attend the next day, which gave further opportunity for discussion. Rev. den Hollander also used the visit to Michigan to preach in the Wyoming URC and the Byron Center URC on the Sunday preceding the Classis. After both services, he did a presentation to the respective congregations.

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N	IOTES	5.	On October 27 and November 3, 2013, Rev. den Hollander preached at the URCNA church in Cape Coral FL. On that second Sunday, he did a presentation to the congregation about the CanRC and the pur suit of merger.
		6.	In the evening of November 18, 2013 and in the afternoon of November 20, 2013, Rev. W. den Hollander and Rev. C.J. VanderVelde me with the URCNA's Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) at the occasion of the annual meeting of NAPARC in Flat Rock, North Carolina. We presented the URCNA brothers with a copy of the <i>Acts</i> of General Synod Carman 2013. We used this occasion to seek clarification from CERCU about the authoritative status of the different categories of doctrinal statements adopted by recenured URCNA Synods and to explain why the CanRCs do not like such statements. We also discussed how best to move the merger efforts for ward. Please see Appendix #1 for the Press Release.
		7.	On Dec 1, 2013, Rev. den Hollander preached at the URCNA church in Pella IA as well as at the URCNA church in Des Moines IA. Both times he did a presentation to the congregation after the service
		8.	Rev. W. den Hollander attended Classis Pacific Northwest February 25, 2014 in Ripon, CA and brought fraternal greetings on behalf of the CanRC, being invited to do so. On the Monday before Classis, a ministerial took place at which Rev. den Hollander could speak personally with various ministers and address their concerns.
		9.	Rev. W. den Hollander attended Classis Southwestern Ontario March 12, 2014 in Brantford, ON and brought fraternal greetings on behalf o the CanRC.
		10.	On March 20, 2014, Rev. den Hollander spoke upon invitation to past present, and future officebearers at the Providence URC in Winnipeg MB. This meeting was attended by URC and CanRC men and addressed the pursuit of ecclesiastical unity between the URC and CanRC
		11.	Rev. W. den Hollander and Rev. C.J. VanderVelde attended Synoc 2014, for its duration, from June 2-5, 2014, which was held at Visalia California. Rev. den Hollander brought fraternal greetings on behalf o the CanRC; see appendix #2 for the address.
		12.	The Council of the Free Reformed Church of Baldivis, Australia sough our input as to whether they should initiate an overture through thei broader assemblies to the effect that the Free Reformed Churches o Australia (FRCA) take up the invitation of the URCNA to explore the possibility of entering a relationship of Ecumenical Contact (Phase One) with the URCNA. In a letter written in June 2014, we strongly recommended pursuing this.
		13.	On September 24, 2014, Rev. W. den Hollander and Rev. C.J. VanderVelde met with Rev. J.A Bouwers to have a brainstorming ses.

sion about how to move the relationship between the CanRC and UR-

	CNA forward after Synod Visalia 2014's decision to "table indefinitely" the proposal to encourage CERCU to work on a formal plan leading to Phase 3A (merger).	NOTES
14.	On September 30, 2014, Rev. W. den Hollander met with the Council of the Dunnville, Ontario URC, upon their request, to speak about the merger pursuit in general and also specifically about how the CanRC	
	have taken the decision of Synod Visalia 2014. There was also dis-	
	cussion about the forms for the excommunication of communicant and	
	non-communicant members, lapsing of membership, liturgy, and other matters.	
15.	On October 5, 2014, Rev. W. den Hollander preached in the New Ha-	
	ven, Vermont URC, upon their invitation, and did a presentation to the congregation about the unity efforts.	
16.	On November 11, 2014, Rev. W. den Hollander and Rev. C.J. VanderVel-	
	de had a meeting with CERCU at the occasion of NAPARC held in	
	Grassie, ON. The focus of the meeting was: How do we move the relationship between the CanRC and the URCNA forward after Synod	
	Visalia 2014's decision to "table indefinitely" the proposal to encourage	
	CERCU to work on a formal plan leading to Phase 3A (merger)? How	
	do we implement the calling/principle regarding unity in a practical way, both locally in Canada and federatively in North America? We also dis-	
	cussed how Synod Visalia 2014's decision is perceived in the CanRC,	
	and whether CERCU can go to URC congregations where resistance	
	to merger is strong in order to promote the cause. We reflected on the overture to Synod 2016 from Classis Pacific Northwest October 14 and	
	15, 2014 calling for the discontinuation of all further action, advance-	
	ment, processes, efforts or steps toward merger at this time. We exhort-	
	ed one another to proceed with patience and love in this whole process.	
17.	Rev. W. den Hollander was in attendance at Classis Southwestern Ontario November 26, 2014 convened in Hamilton, Ontario (where an-	
	other CanRC minister was already present as fraternal delegate and	
	spoke as such on behalf of one of our Classes). Rev. Henry VanOlst	
	informed Classis about Rev. den Hollander's interim ministry in the Dunnville URC during its vacancy and about the upcoming interim re-	
	lationship with the Hamilton-Rehoboth URC during its vacancy. This	
	kind of ongoing relationship in a local congregation has helped to so-	
	lidify the CanRC-URCNA relationship.	
18.	Rev. C.J. VanderVelde attended Classis Southwestern Ontario March 25, 2015 held in Listowel, ON and brought fraternal greetings on behalf	
	of the CanRC.	

19. Rev. W. den Hollander and Rev. C.J. VanderVelde met with the URC-NA's Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) at the occasion of the annual meeting of NAPARC held in Quebec City from November 10-12, 2015. We discussed developments since our last meeting together and hopes for the future. We noted that slow but

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certain progress, though at times difficult, is nevertheless encouraging. We discussed the wisdom of having a period of time in which there is no pressure of having Phase 3A on the immediate horizon but in which efforts can be made to cultivate our relationship in the USA. This may be of benefit to those churches in the USA where there is a lingering discomfort about the unity efforts. In addition, we had much opportunity to discuss informally with members of CERCU how the pursuit of unity can best be enhanced.

By the Spring of 2014, all of the American Classes within the URCNA had been visited. The overall impression is that among the Classes in the USA the response generally speaking was somewhat ambivalent, lacking the interest and support one may expect for a federative pursuit of church unity with a federation of the same precious faith. There could be all kinds of reasons for this. On the one hand, there appears to be little sense of an ecumenical imperative toward union. On the other hand, the sentiment was expressed by some officebearers that the URCNA federation has changed a lot since 2001, with the result that the effort toward merger is no longer supported as it was before 2001 when the federation was dominated by the Canadian URCs. Furthermore, the (perceived) Canadian Reformed view of the covenant was challenged by some – a concern which has in many ways been removed by the colloquium at Synod Visalia 2014. In view of the above, let us pray that further efforts made by CERCU and CCU may be blessed with a growing interest federation-wide among the URCNA.

## The Status of the Doctrinal Statements

Synod Carman 2013 mandated the coordinators of the CCU to seek clarification from CERCU on the authoritative status and definitions of the different categories of doctrinal statements adopted by recent URCNA synods. This mandate arose from a concern that the churches might be binding themselves beyond the confessions. The *Synodical Rules of Procedure* adopted by Synod Nyack 2012 as they pertain to doctrinal affirmation and pastoral advice are as follows:

- Doctrinal Affirmation: A Doctrinal Affirmation is an interpretation of the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity on a specific point of their teaching (Acts of Synod 2004, Article 76.B.b., p. 29).
  - 1.1 A Doctrinal Affirmation serves the churches by directing them to the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity, applying them in response to doctrinal questions that has arisen in the churches.
  - 1.2 A Doctrinal Affirmation should be received by the churches with respect and submission, and it may not be directly or indirectly contradicted in preaching or in writing (Church Order Articles 29 and 31; Form of Subscription). The Scriptures, Ecumenical Creeds, and the Three Forms of Unity alone may serve as grounds in matters of discipline (Acts of Synod 2007, Article 67.4, p. 36).

- 1.3 A Doctrinal Affirmation may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31 (Form of Subscription, Regulations for Synodical Procedure 3.4 and Appendix B).
- Pastoral Advice: Pastoral Advice is Synod's application of the Scriptures, the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity to particular circumstances in the life of the churches.
  - 2.1 Pastoral Advice expresses the collective wisdom of Synod to guide the churches in their pastoral care.
  - 2.2 Pastoral Advice should be received with respect. It would be unwise to disregard Pastoral Advice in preaching or writing. It may not, however, serve as grounds in matters of discipline.
  - 2.3 Pastoral Advice may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31 (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.4 and Appendix B).

(Acts of Synod Nyack 2012, Article 45, p. 37)

The Fifteen Points adopted by Synod London 2010 were doctrinal affirmations prefaced with the statement "That Synod affirm the following teachings of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity" (*Acts* of Synod London 2010, Article 113, p. 66). This means that the Fifteen Points may not be directly or indirectly contradicted in preaching or in writing. At the same time, it is important to note from the above rules of procedure that only the Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity may be used as grounds for discipline; doctrinal affirmations and pastoral advice are not given that status.

The doctrinal affirmations by their very definition thus present a particular interpretation of the Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity. Anytime there is a further definition or interpretation of something in our Confessions there is a (potential) narrowing of the range of interpretation allowed. This has been the longstanding concern of the CanRC regarding such statements, and we as coordinators conveyed this to CERCU at the meeting in Flat Rock. NC in November 2013.

At the same time, it should be mentioned that there are also other ways in which doctrinal statements could be made which seek to define or interpret something in the Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity. This too could result in narrowing the range of interpretation allowed. For example, when a CanRC ecclesiastical assembly is faced with an appeal about a doctrinal matter, the considerations leading up to the recommendation could consist of doctrinal affirmations involving the definition and interpretation of something in the Scriptures or the Confessions. The status of such considerations would not be equal to the status of the points adopted by recent URCNA synods, but the *practice* in such instances also amounts to articulating certain points of doctrine. The difference is that in the case of the points adopted by the URCNA the doctrinal statements are codified. whereas this is not the case when doctrinal statements are made in the considerations leading up to an ecclesiastical assembly's decision. To be fair and to present as balanced a picture as possible in this whole matter, we as coordinators also mentioned this in our discussion with CERCU.

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Moreover, much could depend on how the Fifteen Points are understood. For example, point #5 of the Fifteen Points of London affirms that "Adam was obligated to obey 'the commandment of life' in order to live in fellowship with God and enjoy His favor eternally (Belgic Confession, Article 14, Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 3)." Does this mean that an officebearer must hold to the existence of a covenant of works before the Fall into sin? That particular language is not used, but what is the import of this statement? When we as coordinators mentioned the discomfort that many in the CanRC have with the language of "covenant of works" and read some quotations to that effect from a published work, this sparked considerable discussion and led to the expression of some concern on the part of several members of CERCU. It was partly because of this discussion at Flat Rock, NC in November 2013 that CERCU felt that perhaps a colloquium should be organized to give a keener focus on whether our differences are within what we confess together in the Three Forms of Unity. This discussion at Flat Rock, NC underlines our concern about extra-confessional statements because it shows that doctrinal affirmations made to interpret the Confessions are themselves open to interpretation.

Herewith we pass along to Synod Dunnville 2016 that we as coordinators have sought and received clarification from CERCU on the authoritative status and definitions of the different categories of doctrinal statements adopted by recent URCNA synods.

## Synod Visalia 2014 on Unity Matters

In its report to Synod Visalia 2014 as included in the *Provisional Agenda*, CERCU made many heartening comments with respect to the effort toward church unity. We read: "One third of the URC has discovered that the Canadian Reformed are our dear brothers and sisters in the faith. That two thirds of the URC has not had the opportunity to discover this truth firsthand continues to present real challenges, but we pray that the two thirds will accept the testimony and witness born [sic] by the one third" (*Provisional Agenda Synod Visalia 2014*, p. 77) The CERCU report goes on to say:

In our discussions together as CERCU we observe that three types of concerns remain regarding the unity process. One is theological. We need to be convinced as churches that the doctrine of the covenant taught in our respective churches can live healthily side by side in one federation within the bounds of our confessions. The second is church political. Given our negative past experiences, there are continued fears concerning perceived hierarchical tendencies in the Proposed Joint Church Order. The third has to do with the will to ecumenism generally; some are not convinced that churches that share a confession are required to seek organizational unity. As a committee we are of a mind that if the first two types of objections can be addressed to our mutual satisfaction, the hesitations with regards to the third will also be alleviated.

According to its mandate, and the ongoing encouragement of synodical decisions, CERCU remains committed to pursuing unity with

these sister churches. Since November 2012, CERCU has communicated by way of press releases and reports to classes, that it decided that we announce to Synod 2014 our intention to propose at Synod 2016 entering Step A – Development of the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union (of Phase Three Church Union). Our Guidelines describe this step as follows...:

## Step A – Development of the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union

Having recognized and accepted each other as true and faithful churches, the federations shall make preparation for and a commitment to eventual, integrated federative church unity. They shall construct a plan of ecclesiastical union which shall outline the timing, coordination, and/or integration of the following:

- a. the broader assemblies
- b. the liturgies and liturgical forms
- c. the translations of the Bible and the confessions
- d. the song books for worship
- e. the church polity and order
- f. the missions abroad

Entering this step of Phase Three requires ratification by the consistories as required in Church Order, Art. 36 (*Provisional Agenda Synod Visalia 2014*, p. 77).

Furthermore, in an effort to clear up theological misconceptions, CERCU proposed that a colloquium be held at Synod Visalia. We read the following in the CERCU report:

To continue to promote better understanding of one another, we are also proposing a one hour colloquium be held at this synod between two respected leaders from each of our federations. We have invited Dr. Robert Godfrey and Dr. Cornel Venema from the URC and Dr. Jason Van Vliet and Dr. Ted Van Raalte of the CanRC. We have asked each group to prepare a paper dealing with the theological concerns that are between us, and then for each group to write a response to the other's paper. Those papers will be available, Lord willing before synod and then at synod the four men will present their conclusions and with each other in a public "colloquium" during an hour we are proposing be set aside during the meeting of synod. By allowing representatives of our churches to dialogue publicly over points of critical interest and importance, it is hoped that greater confidence in our mutual adherence to our Confessions may be promoted

(Provisional Agenda Synod Visalia 2014, p. 78).

Under the heading "The Lord's Work," the CERCU report ends its section on the Canadian Reformed Churches by making these important remarks:

It was the work of God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, which brought about the formation of the URC. It was God who gave

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the faith, courage, love, and mutual trust that united our churches under Scripture and the confessions with a new church order. If a similar love, courage, and trust will bring about a new union with other brothers and sisters of common confession and heritage, this also must be of God. This is why prayer is of utmost importance. Prayer acknowledged [sic] this dependence on God. Prayer means seeking God's will, and not our own. Prayer expresses and reinforces the importance of "making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

The committee has pursued its mandate to seek unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches with the belief that such union would be according to God's Word, and thus pleasing to Him. But such belief alone neither accomplishes anything nor proves it to be the will of God. This is why we have included a recommendation that synod urge the churches to regularly pray for the Lord's guidance and grace that we may know and do His will, and that He might do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think . . . to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations" (Ephesians 3:20-21)

(Provisional Agenda Synod Visalia 2014, p. 79).

Regarding the recommendations of CERCU to Synod Visalia, we note that Recommendation #8 reads: "That Synod remind the churches of our mutual responsibility to engage one another in our ecumenical task through prayer, classical dialogue, local efforts and the expression of concerns." Recommendation #10: "That Synod receive for information the announcement of CERCU that it plans to recommend to Synod 2016 that we proceed to Phase Three A of church unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches that, should the churches approve of this recommendation in 2016, we would begin the Development of a Plan of Union." Recommendation #11 seeks to get the local churches more involved: "That Synod urge the churches to seriously consider which, if any specific articles or stipulations of the PJCO they believe should be changed before it can be adopted for a united federation, and seek to bring such concerns to Synod 2016 by way of overture to their classis." And Recommendation #12: "That Synod approve the cooperation of the PJCO [Proposed Joint Church Order] Committee with CERCU for the working on as yet unresolved difficulties that will be encountered in formulating a plan of union" (Provisional Agenda Synod Visalia 2014, p. 84).

One final recommendation which, although lengthy, is worth quoting in its entirety:

That Synod continue to encourage each classis and consistory to continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCNA by inviting Canadian Reformed ministers to fill our pulpits, inviting Canadian Reformed representatives to our classis meetings, seeking open dialogue with Canadian Reformed brothers

regarding any outstanding areas of concern, organizing joint events with Canadian Reformed congregations, attending joint conferences, and writing columns to foster our mutual understanding and affection Grounds:

- a. Those who have been involved in the process of facilitating greater unity have been profoundly impacted with the spirit of unity. Throughout the process, further dialogue has consistently resulted in warm and cordial relationships and misconceptions have been dispelled.
- b. This would be an encouragement to the Canadian Reformed Churches who through their synodical communications have expressed their willingness to continue working through the challenges involved in seeking unity.
- c. Our own unity as emerging URCNA churches was formed through much of these kinds of relations and interactions before our own official start together.

(Provisional Agenda Synod Visalia 2014, pp. 84,85).

As fraternal delegates representing the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) at Synod Visalia 2014, your coordinators enjoyed much good fellowship with the URC brothers as we attended Synod Visalia for its duration. With two delegates present from each congregation, it is a good opportunity for us as coordinators for church unity to interact with people from all regions of the federation. In addition to the speech by Rev. den Hollander bringing greetings from our federation, the highlight for us as CanRC was the one-hour colloquium (learned discussion) which took place on the floor of Synod by Dr. Robert Godfrey and Dr. Cornel Venema from the URCNA and Dr. Ted VanRaalte and Dr. Jason VanVliet from the CanRC (Article 50). The topic was covenant views. A one-hour question period followed the colloquium, allowing for questions from delegates to Synod Visalia. This colloquium was held at the suggestion of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) of the URCNA. The purpose was to help clear up misunderstandings and to see what the differences are when it comes to prevalent covenant views in the URCNA and the CanRC.

Prior to the colloquium, the two URCNA brothers wrote a paper outlining what they perceived to be the prevalent view within the URCNA, and the two CanRC brothers wrote a paper outlining what they perceived to be the prevalent view within the CanRC. It was made clear at the colloquium that two men cannot speak for an entire federation but that what was presented was fairly representative of each federation. The papers were the basis for the colloquium at Synod. These papers were distributed to all the Councils of the URCNA federation prior to Synod Visalia.

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The colloquium papers indicate no significant differences regarding covenant views and the colloquium itself also led to no disagreement, with the four participants concluding that we are on the same page regarding covenant views. The colloquium was a very positive experience and helped to clear up misunderstandings. As representatives of the CanRC, we received much positive feedback about the colloquium from the delegates of Synod. The colloquium papers can be read at the website of the URCNA at www.urcna.org and have also been sent to the Councils of all Canadian and American Reformed Churches by your coordinators for church unity. There was an audio recording of the colloquium and the question period, which has been transcribed. The papers and the entire proceedings have been published as a book: John A. Bouwers and Theodore G. Van Raalte, eds., *The Bond of the Covenant within the Bounds of the Confessions: A Conversation between the URCNA and CanRC* (St. Catharines, ON: Church Unity Publications, 2015). We hope that many will read it.

In dealing with the CERCU report, the advisory committee of Synod recommended that Synod encourage CERCU in its plans to recommend to Synod 2016 that the URCNA proceed to Phase Three Step A of church unity with the CanRC; this would mean that, should the churches approve of this recommendation in 2016, CERCU would begin the Development of a Plan of Union. This was "tabled indefinitely," which according to Robert's Rules of Order means that Synod Visalia did not want to adopt or defeat this recommendation, choosing instead to postpone a decision about it (Article 53, Recommendation 9). This decision shows that the URCNA is not ready to proceed further with concrete steps toward merger at this time. While this decision is disappointing for us as CanRC, we can be thankful that the recommendation was not defeated but tabled indefinitely. With the time remaining in our mandate as coordinators for church unity, we continued to build relationships within the American section of the URCNA, and we tried to cultivate a will to ecumenism. We will see how the LORD decides to bless our efforts in the future.

Synod Visalia did adopt a recommendation of the advisory committee that the churches seriously consider which, if any, specific articles or stipulations of the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) they believe should be changed before the PJCO can be adopted for a united federation, and that the churches seek to bring such concerns to Synod 2016 by way of overture to their Classes (Article 73, Recommendation 10). Synod instructed the PJCO committee to wait with doing further work on the PJCO until after a decision to enter Phase 3A with the CanRC (Article 69, Recommendation 1).

The reasoning which led Synod Visalia to instruct the PJCO committee to wait with doing further work on the PJCO until after a decision to enter Phase 3A with the CanRC is a departure from the approach of previous Synods. The ground is that the PJCO work properly belongs to Phase 3A, and the URCNA is not yet in Phase 3A with the CanRC (Article 69, Recommendation 1). However, the PJCO committee had been working for several years already in anticipation of a future merger, thereby doing groundwork for such a merger.

Furthermore, in keeping with Synod Nyack 2012, Synod Visalia reiterated that each Classis and Consistory continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCNA by inviting CanRC ministers to fill pulpits, inviting CanRC representatives to Classes, seeking open dialogue with CanRC brothers regarding any outstanding areas of concern, organizing joint events with CanRC congregations, attending joint conferences, and writing columns to foster our mutual understanding and affection (Article 26, Recommendation 12).

As we look back over the years, we realize that the process toward merger between the CanRC and the URCNA has been very slow, but we also realize that there has been a gradual but steady movement toward one another. The colloquium and the conclusions that can be drawn from it are another step on that road. Our increasing contact as coordinators with churches and Classes in the USA has built relationships and deepened awareness of the CanRC.

# Synod Visalia on Other Matters

In other news from Synod Visalia, we pass on that Rev. Richard Bout was elected to serve as Missions Coordinator. Rev. Bout had served as a church-planting missionary in Mexico for the past fifteen years and was awaiting a call after repatriating (Article 66, Recommendation 8, Article 84, Recommendation 8). His task will be to offer support and direction to the various church-planting projects of the URCNA, both abroad and at home. Two Councils are prepared to supervise Rev. Bout as Missions Coordinator; one of them will take on this task.

Furthermore, Synod adopted a Psalm Proposal of the 150 Psalms to be the Psalter portion of the new songbook for the URCNA. (About twenty of these Psalms are Genevans from our *Book of Praise*.) This Psalm Proposal was the joint effort of a URCNA committee and an Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) committee (Article 32, Recommendation 4). An OPC General Assembly meeting at the same time elsewhere also adopted this Psalm Proposal. The work on the Hymn section is ongoing and is expected to be completed in time for Synod 2016, the LORD willing (Article 32, Recommendation 7).

Synod Visalia also decided to invite the OPC to hold its 2016 General Assembly at the same time and place as the next Synod of the URCNA (Article 32, Recommendation 11). The grounds are that this would be an expression of unity as sister churches in Christ, an expression of appreciation for the OPC invitation to join them in the production of a new songbook, and an opportunity to hold a joint discussion on the songbook should both assemblies desire to do so. It was decided that Synod 2016 will be held in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area.

Synod Visalia decided that the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (Phase One) with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA), the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv), the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC), and the Calvinistic Reformed Church in Indonesia

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(GGRTNTT). Synod Visalia decided to discontinue Ecumenical Contact (Phase One) with the Free Protestant Church in Argentina. Synod Visalia decided that the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Contact (Phase One) with the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT) and the Evangelical and Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW). Synod Visalia decided that the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase Two) with the United Reformed Churches of Congo (URCC) (Article 33 and 54).

# Other Developments

Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 (Article 30) dealt with -- and adopted -- an overture from one of the churches (Zion URC of Ripon CA) "...to overture Synod Wyoming 2016 to direct CERCU to discontinue all further action, advancement, processes, efforts or steps towards unification with the Canadian Reformed Churches and specifically advancement to Phase 3, Step A." Ground #2 adduces that "...two-thirds of the federation does not approve of unification with the Canadian Reformed Churches and is resistant to CERCU's proceedings." [Note: This is based on a misreading of CERCU's report to Synod Visalia 2014.] Ground #3 reads: "The URCNA's current Phase II status of unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches is altogether satisfactory and effective and no compelling need to proceed to total union is presented." Ground #6: "Phase II Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches presently satisfies biblical requirements for pursuing Christian unity." Ground #5 asserts that the process has been "significantly distracting" from other matters such as missions and evangelism and from "...the very unity that we now do share and appreciate with the Canadian Reformed Churches." The overture does not close the door entirely on merger efforts because Ground #9 posits: "Staying in Phase II for the foreseeable future will in no way prejudice later initiatives to advance unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches."

While Synod Visalia 2014 "tabled indefinitely" the recommendation to *encourage* CERCU to work toward recommending to Synod 2016 that the URCNA proceed to Phase Three Step A of church unity with the CanRC – meaning that Synod Visalia did not want to vote for or against it – this overture going to Synod 2016 seeks to *stifle* any effort intended to lead to unification. If this is adopted by Synod Wyoming 2016, it will spell the end of any effort toward merger for the foreseeable future.

Moreover, Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 (Article 32) also dealt with an overture from one of the churches (Immanuel's Reformed Church of Salem OR) to the effect that Classis Pacific Northwest overture Synod 2016 "...to declare that the Proposed Joint Church Order (a church order proposed for use in the prospective union of the United Reformed Churches with the Canadian Reformed Churches) is unusable for that purpose." Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 adopted this overture, and so it too is going to Synod 2016. The overture asserts that the Proposed Joint Church Order "vacates" a principle held dear by the URCNA, namely, that authority in Christ's church resides with

the local eldership and not broader assemblies. The overture maintains that this principle is violated by such stipulations as having to maintain a seminary, licensure by Classis, counselors appointed for vacant churches by Classis, the role of deputies of Regional Synod, having Regional Synods, admission to the pulpit, etc. The fact that this overture is going to Synod 2016 shows that we are still a long way from agreement on how a merged federation would operate.

Furthermore, Classis Central US April 13-14, 2015 (Article 35) also dealt with an overture arising from one of the churches (Cornerstone URC of Sanborn IA), and adopted this overture, with the result that it too will be an overture on the agenda of Synod 2016. The overture seeks to change the mandate of CERCU. The mandate of CERCU currently reads: "With a view toward complete church unity, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian federations selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order." The overture proposes that it read: "With a desire to pursue a broader unity with churches that share a common confession and faith, and acknowledging the desirability of union with churches of like faitl and practice, where feasible, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the es tablishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyteria federations selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order." In explanation, Ground #6 states: "The current terminology `Witi a view toward complete church unity...' appears to be used by the com mittee in a way which seems to keep driving toward organic union with the Canadian Reformed Churches without recognizing differences in like-faith like-practice and the desire of churches in our federation to acknowledge them as a true church but not proceed further at this point."

While this overture is not as far-reaching as the overture going to Synod 2016 from Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 (the overture originating from Zion URC of Ripon CA), our concern is that this proposed change to the CERCU mandate is designed to put the brakes on unity efforts with the CanRC and seems to suggest a weaker commitment to efforts toward merger. Especially the words "where feasible" could potentially lead to a neglect of the calling to work toward unity. The fact that it was adopted by Classis Central US and is going to Synod Wyoming 2016 as an overture is further evidence of a lingering discomfort regarding merger efforts among URC churches. If adopted, the message to CERCU is clear with respect to its dealings with the CanRC. If not adopted, it is still clear that there is a lingering discomfort among URC churches regarding merger efforts. And if the overture from Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 is adopted, the overture from Classis Central US April 13-14, 2015 becomes a moot point regarding the CanRC.

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Considering the above, the future for unity efforts looks less hopeful. We will have to await the outcome of Synod Wyoming 2016. Let us remember Synod Wyoming 2016 in our prayers, both as congregations and individuals, and pray that the vision of Synod Escondido 2001 -- which agreed to the Phase Two relationship and looked beyond to eventual merger -- may not be lost.

At the same time, it should be noted that positive remarks were made regarding unity at Classis Eastern US October 2014, at which time the question was asked: "Why are churches holding to the Three Forms of Unity not united?" CERCU was even told to present this question at NAPARC's meeting in Grassie, Ontario in November 2014. Hopefully, this sentiment too will be heard at Synod Wyoming 2016.

While it is easy to become discouraged by the unity efforts, we should not lose sight of the many blessings which we enjoy in our relationship together as churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship – all of which are the result of a slow but steady growing together over a period of twenty years. Pulpit exchanges take place in many parts of Canada, we work together in Streetlight Ministries (a mission church in Hamilton, Ontario) as well as in Campfire (an evangelistic camping experience for the unchurched), there is a combined effort in the Anchor Association (an association to help handicapped brothers and sisters), we work together in Reformed schooling, there are combined young people's activities, and there were two full-time interim ministries by a retired CanRC minister in URCNA churches during a time of vacancy (Rev. W. den Hollander in Dunnville, Ontario and Hamilton, Ontario).

### Considerations

 As coordinators, we have sought and received clarification from CER-CU on the authoritative status and definitions of the different categories of doctrinal statements adopted by recent URCNA synods. We as coordinators conveyed the concern of the CanRC that such doctrinal statements have the potential of narrowing too much the range of interpretation allowed and that these doctrinal statements themselves are open to interpretation.

At the same time, it is clear to us that the URCNA is committed to the doctrinal statements made by recent Synods and that these will not be reversed. It is a reality on the North American ecclesiastical scene that churches make statements on various matters in order to further delineate where they stand on the theological issues of the day. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) has done it, as well as the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), and now also the URCNA. Our concerns about this practice have been stated, and we should leave it at that.

Moreover, as reported to Synod Carman 2013, the URCNA has assured the CanRC that the doctrinal statements made about the Federal Vision were not directed against the CanRC. The colloquium at Synod Visalia 2014 also indicated that there are no significant differences in covenant views between the URCNA and the CanRC. We should not consider the doctrinal statements of recent URCNA synods as a threat to us. This too is a reason not to pursue further with the URCNA the matter of doctrinal statements.

2. As we look back over the years, we realize that the process toward merger between the CanRC and the URCNA has been very slow, but we also realize that there has been a gradual but steady movement toward one another. The colloquium at Synod Visalia 2014 and the conclusions that can be drawn from it are another step on that road. Our increasing contact as coordinators with churches and Classes in the USA has built relationships and deepened awareness of the CanRC. As opportunity allows, we should continue to build on the progress made.

Much depends on what Synod Wyoming 2016 will decide with respect to overtures designed to significantly delay any effort intended to lead to unification with the CanRC in the foreseeable future. Let us remember Synod Wyoming 2016 in our prayers, both as congregations and individuals, and pray that the vision of Synod Escondido 2001 – which agreed to the Phase Two relationship and looked beyond to eventual merger – may not be lost.

# Recommendations

We recommend:

- That Synod Dunnville 2016 decide that the Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity have completed their mandate given by Synod Carman 2013 to discuss with CERCU the areas of concern or fear in the URCNA that seem to be hindering progress toward a merger with the CanRC.
- That Synod Dunnville decide that the Coordinators for the Committee
  for Church Unity have completed their mandate given by Synod Carman to seek ways to facilitate the work of building unity on the local
  level, as well as visiting churches and classes of the URCNA, particularly in the United States.
- 3. That Synod Dunnville decide that the Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity have completed their mandate given by Synod Carman to discuss with CERCU how to make preparations for Phase 3, such as through the reappointment of the subcommittees for theological education, liturgical forms and confessions and a common songbook.
- 4. That Synod Dunnville decide that the Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity have completed their mandate given by Synod Carman to seek clarification from CERCU on the authoritative status and definitions of the different categories of doctrinal statements adopted

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	<ol><li>That Synod Dunnville reappoint Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity.</li></ol>
	<ol> <li>That Synod Dunnville give the Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity a specific and well-defined mandate.</li> </ol>
	Respectfully submitted with brotherly greetings, Rev. William den Hollander Rev. Clarence J. VanderVelde
	Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity (CCU)

# Appendix #1 NOTES

### Press Release CERCU/CCU November 2013

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

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

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

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

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

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# Appendix #2

Fraternal Greetings by Rev. W. den Hollander to Synod Visalia 2014

# Esteemed Brothers in the Church of Christ

It truly is an honour and privilege that I may once again be present in your midst and address you as General Synod of the URCNA. The fact that I can address you in your broadest assembly with all your churches represented by its delegates makes this moment very special. Since GS Nyack 2012 I have been in the rather unique position of visiting seven of your eight Classes. Included in these visits were some 16 opportunities to conduct worship services in URC congregations, and besides those to preach as well in other churches among your Classes upon special invitations. Aside from these preaching engagements I could address your Classes and congregations to introduce the federation of CanRC and its history and heritage. In short, if ever it has been appropriate to apply the figure of "ambassadors" to the servants of Christ as they make their appeal on Christ's behalf [2 Cor. 5:20], I certainly felt like I came in that function! My appeal, however, on behalf of Christ, was not so much as saying, "Be reconciled to God," but to encourage you with the other words of the apostle. "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace!" Indeed, your invitations, your receptions, and your interests and inquiries, together with my humble attempts in fulfilling my mandate, did add up to the apostle's appeal to manifest the maintenance of the unity of the Spirit and to promote the will to ecumenicity through the bond of peace!

Brothers, I consider myself exceedingly blessed by the experiences enjoyed during these visits and occasions. Just as we are exulting here at GS Visalia 2014, so I rejoiced in each and every of the other opportunities, in the truth of the words of Psalm 133, "Behold, how pleasant and how good, that we, one Lord confessing, together dwell in brotherhood, our unity expressing!" [PH #279] When the CERCU report to your synod mentions that "Growing love, mutual knowledge and trust, as well as increased cooperation in such things as education, evangelism, youth activities, conferences, joint services, and pulpit exchanges have marked the past number of years," among the churches in closer geographical proximity that is, then I may add that *also* these *my* personal encounters contributed to a similar growth in love, mutual knowledge and trust! Your committee report is so true when it observes that "It is significant that the closer and more frequent the interaction has been, the greater is the interest and openness toward progressing onward in this endeavour."

At times the question was put to me whether I was *still* as convinced and motivated that the process toward organizational unity should be pursued, having experienced and discovered that "significant ambivalence remains concerning the whole process among the US Classes of the URC." [As your CERCU report refers to my findings.] Let me assure you with all the sincerity of my heart and integrity of my faith, that my exposure to these

US churches and Classes and my interaction with the brotherhood in the URCNA have become an even greater incentive for this pursuit than I have had since the beginning of my involvement in 1992. In fact, the *miracle* of the growing unity among the churches in Canada to the point of its present integration and immersion and cooperation at every level of church life, congregational communion, and the pursuit of kingdom service in a growing number of areas of life, this *miracle* must be a strong motivation to *continue* our pursuit to the point at which we may see *the miracle of the 21*<sup>st</sup> century come true in the union of the URCNA and CanRC to the greater glory of God our Saviour and as testimony to the world!

Why this should be? Well, brothers, we all know that the church gathering work of Christ is a dynamic process. When you, in 1995/6 set out to establish the federation of United Reformed Churches in North America, you pursued a union by faith, in love, with courage, and in mutual trust (as your CERCU report testifies!), because you knew that this was in accordance with the Word of God. You did so because the entire Scripture reveals this dynamic process toward union in Old and New Testament: in the service of God at Shiloh, in *one* tabernacle, *one* temple, for the *one* people of God (which was composed of twelve so very different tribes!), a unity of God's people which our Saviour articulated when speaking about *one* flock and *one* Shepherd, revealing to us in the NT gathering of His church that He breaks down dividing walls to unite Jews and Gentiles, uniting them into *one* holy nation, working towards the *one* multitude! God is one; He unites under the headship of Jesus Christ, and He restores unity as well!

Then the Scriptures reveal to us that this work is visible: the multitude in Revelation 7 came about through Christ, as He walked among the churches in Asia Minor, holding their stars in His one hand, being the one foundation under their local churches, which expressed their unity by being a hand and foot to each other, in the congregations and among their federa tion! Indeed, it is this dynamic work of God that we can see throughout the history of the church, as we confess in the oneness and catholicity of the church! Hence, we are urged to look at God's work and not at the people and their feelings, reservations, or their ambivalence, but we must see ou faith working through love, Scripturally, confessionally, historically, and or ganizationally! The church is pillar and foundation of the truth; it's this truth which unites believers, congregations, and federations! We have seen the miracle of this unity develop and grow in Canada, as it continues to mani fest itself; in the same spirit of unity in the truth we may see this dynamic character of the church become evident in the union that we continue to pursue as brothers and sisters of common confession and heritage!

Esteemed brothers, just as GS Escondido 2001 was pivotal in promoting a growing momentum by its forward-looking decisions and appointments, you have gathered in one of the churches in California again with the opportunity to maintain and increase the momentum through decisions and CERCU's recommendations which pursue this unity in the truth (including our common understanding of the richness of the doctrine of the cov-

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enant)! The most recent GS of the CanRC, in Carman 2013, has reiterated and confirmed its sincere desire that we proceed in the way in which the Lord of the church has blessed us so exceedingly. It endorsed your CERCU's plan for the preparation of union in the coming years till your and our next GS, in 2016 the Lord willing. We, as Coordinators of the Committee for Church Unity, the Rev. Clarence VanderVelde and I (your ambassador of the CanRC) will be ready and eager to do everything we can to cooperate and to facilitate whatever plans and discussions need to pave the way for your consideration and decision of our desired union. Personally I would like to assure you that as gladly as I have accepted the invitations and made the visits to your churches and Classes to *introduce* our churches, so eagerly I would be available to *further* your acquaintance and remove whatever ambivalence remains!

Dear brothers in the Lord, receive the greetings of the CanRC in the communion of the Spirit of peace and in the pursuit of Scriptural ecumenicity and the ecclesiastical unity of our two Reformed federations of churches of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Appendix #3 NOTES

# Summary of the Doctrine of the Covenants: A URCNA Perspective

Cornelis P. Venema and W. Robert Godfrey June, 2014

# Introduction

We have been asked by the CERCU of the URCNA to address the question whether our federations' (URCNA and CaRCs) hold to different views of the doctrine of the covenant, and whether these views, though different, fit within the boundaries of acceptable teaching, as these boundaries are defined by the Three Forms of Unity. In order to fulfill this mandate, we decided to focus upon two doctrinal matters: 1) the doctrine of the prefall covenant relationship between God and the human race in Adam (commonly termed the "covenant of works"); and 2) the doctrine of the covenant of grace, particularly in respect to its relationship to the doctrine of election. We believe that these are the two primary topics where there may be differences between our two federations.

It should be observed that we do not intend to offer a summary in what follows that fully expresses the diversity of opinion that obtains within the URCNA. What we present is a summary of what we believe is a common understanding of these topics within the URCNA. The key questions are: Are these opinions in conformity to, or within the boundaries set by, the Three Forms of Unity? Are they opinions that the CaRCs believe are within confessional boundaries?

# The Pre-fall Covenant ("covenant of works")

We believe that the following theses summarize a common view of the pre-fall covenant, which is held by many in the URCNA to conform to the teaching of the Three Forms of Unity:

Adam's obedience to the requirements of his pre-fall fellowship with the Triune Creator was the "condition" for his continuance in and entrance into further life in blessed fellowship with God. The "life" implicitly promised (indeed, the promise of "eternal life" in immutable fellowship with God; cf. Gen. 3:22) in this fellowship would not be a "free gift" of God's *saving grace*, but a covenanted reward granted in the way of (and in no other way) of Adam's "perfect obedience." What Adam would have received from his Triune Creator, were he to have obeyed the requirements of the pre-fall covenant, would fully accord with divine truth and justice. (See Belgic Confession, Article 14, the "commandment of life"; HC Lord's Day 3.6, "so that [aus dass] he might live with Him in eternal blessedness"; HC Lord's Day 16.40.)

Adam's "justification" prior to the fall, though a matter of his "reputation" by God's declaration (forensic), was not on account of the righteousness of Another, but on account of a righteousness which was his own (though his by virtue of God's favor, enablement and provision). Prior to the fall into sin, Adam was properly reckoned to be righteous by God, but this was not

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an act of God's saving grace in Christ (see Rom. 5:12-21). Even if Adam's enjoyment of justification and eternal life would not be "merited" by "strict justice" (because it depended upon God's covenanted promise to grant him life on condition of his obedience), it would be granted him as a reward for his obedience. In this respect, it would be a "covenanted merit" or reward based upon Adam's obedience to the condition of the covenant.

The justice and truth of God satisfied through the work of Christ, the second Adam, consists in His active and passive obedience. For this reason, we speak (and the confessions consistently speak) of Christ's "merits" or of His "meriting" for us righteousness, favor and eternal life. (See, for example, Belgic Confession, Article 20-23; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 2-7, 16.40, 23-24.)

The Reformed tradition (including Calvin) has always fully concurred with the "distinction" (yes, even a repugnance) between "law" and "gospel," when it comes to the decisive matter of the believer's free justification. (See Belgic Confession, Article 22-23; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 2,21,23-24,44; Calvin Comm. Jn. 1:17; Rom. 4:15; Gal. 3:19; 2 Cor. 3:6; Deut. 7:9; Institutes II.ix.4; II.7.16; Bavinck, GD, vol. 3, par. 349: "wettisch [and not an] Evangelisch verbond.")

The Reformed objection to Rome is not that it uses the language of "merit," but that it speaks of the believer's "merit" rather than acknowledging the perfection, the sufficiency and the power of the merit of Christ imputed to us for justification.

Thus, everything that constitutes a necessary and sufficient basis for affirming a pre-fall covenant of works in distinction from a post-fall covenant of grace is set forth in the Three Forms of Unity. (See, for example, Belgic Confession, Articles 14,20,22,23,24; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 3-6,15-17,23-24; Canons of Dort Head of Doctrine II; III.2.)

## The Covenant of Grace

In the following summary, we begin with points (#1-3) where there is little or no difference of expression or emphasis, so far as we can determine, between our two federations. The following points (#4-6) address areas where there may be differences of expression or emphasis.

- After the fall into sin through the disobedience of Adam, the triune Redeemer instituted a second covenant, the covenant of grace, between Himself and believers and their seed. In the covenant of grace, believers are promised salvation and new life through the work of Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, and are called to faith and obliged unto new obedience.
- 2. In the historical administration of the covenant of grace, we may distinguish without separating between the "promises" of the covenant and the "demands" or obligations of the covenant. When believers and their children embrace the covenant promises in Christ in the way of faith, they enjoy the "blessings" of the covenant—fellowship with the living God through Christ and by His indwelling Spirit, the forgiveness of sins

and free justification, the restoration of the image of God, renewal in
righteousness by the Spirit, and the promise of everlasting life. When
believers and their children do not believe or embrace the covenant
promises, or walk in a manner that is consistent with the covenant's
demands, they break the covenant and come under God's judgment.

- 3. Believers and their children may be assured of God's gracious promise to them, which is communicated through Word and sacrament, and be confident in the reliable Word that God speaks to them. The doctrine of election is one that honors God alone as the Savior of His people, and provides a sure basis for the believer's confidence in God's saving power. However, the doctrine of election must be handled with appropriate care, and never be treated in a way that undermines the believer's confidence in God's covenant Word or promise.
- 4. It is important to distinguish the covenant of grace in its historical administration and the covenant of grace in its saving efficacy (sometimes called the "dual aspect" of the covenant). In its substance and saving efficacy, the covenant of grace is the means whereby God saves his elect people in Christ. Redemption is ultimately a divine gift and gracious inheritance granted in Christ to fallen but elect sinners. The covenant of grace, so far as its saving efficacy is concerned, is not merely a "conditional offer" of salvation to those who are "under" the covenant, but it is also the instrument whereby God communicates to his elect people all that is granted them in Christ. With respect to the saving efficacy of the covenant of grace, God grants to the elect all that is theirs in Christ. The very "conditions" that God stipulates in the covenant of grace, are obtained and granted to the elect upon the basis of the perfect work of Christ on their behalf. (See Canons of Dort, II.8; II, Rejection of Errors 3-6.)
- 5. The covenant of grace, though it graciously realizes what was typified by the covenant of works, is properly viewed as a "second covenant," and not simply as a re-institution of the covenant relationship. Because Christ, the Mediator of the covenant of grace, accomplishes all that is necessary for the redemption of His people, and communicates the promise effectually to them by His Spirit, we may not view the promises and demands of the covenant of grace as formally the same as the promises and demands of the covenant of works. Christ gives to His own what He requires of them in the covenant of grace. (See F. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Twelfth Topic, Q. 4, #7, 2:191-92 (\*quoted below)
- 6. Though the Three Forms of Unity do not expressly speak of the "visible" and "invisible" church, they do distinguish between those who are "externally" in the church but not genuinely members of Christ (Belgic Confession, Art. 29). The distinction between the covenant in its historical administration and the covenant in its saving efficacy, is parallel to the distinction between all believers and their children who are

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members of the visible church, and the elect who are known to God (2 Tim. 2:19) and who are properly and genuinely members of Christ and partakers in His saving work. This distinction is an important one to maintain, and is supported by the apostle Paul's distinction between those who enjoy certain covenant privileges but are not, strictly speaking, "children of the promise" in the sense of God's purpose of election (Rom. 9:6-8).

(Note: Regarding the distinction between the "visible" and "invisible" church, we believe that Article 29 of the Belgic Confession is translated properly in the English translation in use in the URCNA. In this translation, the third paragraph reads: "With respect to those who are members of the church, they may be known by the marks of Christians: namely, by faith, and when, having received Jesus Christ the only Savior ...." In the English translation of this Article in the Book of Praise of the CaRCs, the third paragraph omits the "when" of the original French and Latin (it reads: "Those who are of the church may be recognized by the marks of Christians. They believe in Jesus Christ the only Saviour ...."). Omitting the "when" of the original may suggest a rather different view as to who genuinely belongs to and is of the church of Jesus Christ.)

\*"Nor can it be objected here that faith was required also in the first covenant and works are not excluded in the second .... They stand in a far different relation. For in the first covenant, faith was required as a work and a part of the inherent righteousness to which life was promised. But in the second, it is demanded—not as a work on account of which life is given, but as a mere instrument apprehending the righteousness of Christ (on account of which alone salvation is granted to us). In the one, faith was a theological virtue from the strength of nature, terminating on God, the Creator; in the other, faith is an evangelical condition after the manner of supernatural grace, terminating on God, the Redeemer. As to works, they were required in the first as an antecedent condition by way of a cause for acquiring life; but in the second, they are only the subsequent condition as the fruit and effect of the life already acquired."

# **Summary of the Doctrine of the Covenants: A CanRC Perspective**

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Theodore G. Van Raalte and Jason P. Van Vliet May 2014

# Introduction

We have been asked by the CERCU of the URCNA and the CCU of the CanRC to address the question whether our respective federations hold different views of the doctrine of the covenant, and whether these views, though possibly different, fit within the bounds of the Three Forms of Unity (TFU).

To the best of our knowledge, we do not believe that any differences between our federations on the topics of covenant and election are of such a nature that they are beyond the bounds of the TFU and therefore doctrinally suspect. In fact, many of the differences *between us* as federations may well also be differences *within* each of our respective federations. Thus, we have not significantly disagreed with our URCNA brothers Venema and Godfrey, but have pointed out some nuances and further considerations.

We consider it important to note that our CanRC forbears often emphasized that there was no unique "CanRC doctrine/theology/view of the covenant." They were adamant that they were bound simply by what is found in the TFU and that the churches ought to have a measure of flexibility within those bounds.

In addition, it appears to us that the view of the covenant presented by brs. Godfrey & Venema is substantially the same as that which is presented in the Westminster Standards. Since 2001 the CanRCs have had ecclesiastical fellowship (sister church relationship) with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), which obviously subscribes to the Westminster Standards. Although the doctrine of the covenant was certainly discussed by the OPC and CanRCs in the years prior to 1998, in the end those discussions did not prevent the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship from being established. This official decision of Synod Fergus 1998, which has also been upheld and reconfirmed at every CanRC synod since then, indicates that the CanRCs are willing to work with those hold a Westminster view of covenant theology, without themselves subscribing to the Westminster standards. By the same token, the OPC have not officially objected to any covenant views found within the CanRCs on the basis of their secondary standards. Keeping this broader perspective in mind gives us good hope that the URCNA and CanRCs, both subscribing to the TFU, should be able to find common ground on the doctrine of the covenant.

Finally, we note that the contribution we hereby offer has no official standing in the CanRCs. CERCU and the URCNA Synod will be well aware of the reticence of the CanRCs to adopt position papers and can no doubt appreciate that we are expressing our own views in ways that we think would be helpful for the promotion of unity between the URCNA and the CanRCs.

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The considerations below have been crafted in response to questions posed by Drs Godfrey and Venema in an email dated Feb 19, 2014, as well as the summary they have put forward (see "Summary of the Doctrine of the Covenants: A URCNA Perspective"). Thus, our considerations should be understood in that context and not regarded as a comprehensive treatment of the covenant, either pre-fall or post-fall.

Their initial questions were:

- 1. What is the understanding of our respective federations regarding the nature of the pre-fall relationship (or covenant) between God, the Triune Creator, and mankind as represented by Adam? We have attached a short summary of what we believe is a common understanding of this pre-fall relationship within the URCNA (see attachment), and would invite you to comment on it from the perspective of the CanRC's.
- 2. What is the understanding of our respective federations regarding the nature of the post-fall covenant of grace? We are especially interested in the question of the relation between the formulation of the doctrine of the covenant, with its "promises" and "demands" (conditions? In what sense?), and the doctrine of election. In the URCNA, it is common to speak of the "dual aspect" of the covenant (G. Vos), and to recognize that the conditions of the covenant are ultimately fulfilled in accordance with God's "purpose of election" (Rom. 9:1ff.).
- 3. How do the CaRCs regard the decisions of recent URCNA synods—re the doctrine of justification, the federal vision controversy, and the relation between covenant and election? The question is not so much whether the URCNA has (arguably) adopted some form of "extra-confessional binding." Rather, the question focuses upon whether it is permissible, even necessary, to distinguish between the covenant in its historical administration and the covenant in its substance and efficacy in the salvation of the elect (what is often called the "dual-aspect" of the covenant, or what is expressed by the distinction between the "visible" and "invisible" church).
- In the URCNA, it is commonly believed that Article 29 of the Belgic Confession warrants a distinction between those who truly belong to Christ and his church and those who are "externally" members of the (visible) church. This Article is thought to warrant a distinction like that between the "visible" and "invisible" church, or the distinction between those who are "in" but not "of" the covenant people of God. What is the understanding of the CanRC's re this distinction? (Note: We are curious that the English translation of the Article in the Book of Praise, third paragraph, reads: "Those who are of the church may be recognized by the marks of Christians. They believe in Jesus Christ the only Saviour ...." In our translation, it reads: "With respect to those who are members of the church, they may be known by the marks of Christians; namely, by faith, and when, having received Jesus Christ the only Savior ...." Your translation seems to ignore the "when" of the original French and Latin, and may suggest a rather different view as to who genuinely belongs to and is of the church of Jesus Christ.)

# **Key Considerations concerning the Covenant before the Fall**

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Concerning Question 1 and Theses on the Pre-fall Covenant [Venema & Godfrey]

- 1. We agree that God's covenanted reward of "immutable fellowship" would be given in Paradise by way of Adam's perfect obedience. We agree that Adam was created with the freedom of choice to serve God or not, a freedom he had to exercise rightly, so that he would show in act and fact that he truly loved his God by submitting to his authority and fulfilling the God-given mandates. However, we point out several nuances:
  - a When God said that his creation was "very good" (Ge 1:31) and when he walked in the cool of the day with Adam and Eve in the Garden *pre-lapsum* (inferred from Ge 3:8) they enjoyed a sinless and uninhibited fellowship with God. Therefore their entrance into "further life" should not be understood to be more than the entrance into a state of *non posse peccare*, or of "immutable fellowship with God" and whatever that entailed. In other words, Adam and Eve already enjoyed the gift of life with God and we should not speak of them as though they lacked any gift or capacity from God, lest we impinge upon created goodness.
  - b. When God threatened the sentence of death in the very day that Adam took of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Ge 2:17), he thereby taught Adam that he had within him the possibility of sinning against God and his neighbour, depending upon the choice of his will. This text, more than Genesis 3:22, ought to be the ground for speaking of Adam's state of *posse peccare*. The history of redemption and history of revelation teach us of God's purpose to bring man to the state of *non posse peccare* (e.g., Re 21-22).
  - d. When Adam obeyed God he did so out of a heart of trust in God. His calling was to have that faith in God which took God at his Word, that hope which looked in faith to the time of "immutable fellowship," and that love which flowed out of such faith. In other words, while the leading measure of Adam's faithfulness was his "personal, perpetual, and perfect obedience" (WCF 7.2, WLC 20), this loving obedience could only have been present together with faith and hope, and particularly as the fruit of such faith/trust. The Westminster Confession thus uses not only "covenant of works" but also "covenant of life" and indeed theologians of the period also spoke of a "covenant of friendship," "legal covenant," "first covenant," and "covenant of nature."
  - d. We caution against stringing together phrases from the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession without due attention to their context, as is done in thesis 1. To wit, the result clause in HC, LD

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- 3.8 "so that he might . . . live with him in eternal blessedness" is not in the context of Adam doing good works but in the context of having been created good "God created man good and in his image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, so that . . ." The fuller quotation emphasizes that Adam was created in true righteousness, not that he had to earn it.
- e. In sum, the life implicitly promised would be a covenanted reward granted in the way of Adam's perfect obedience. As a covenanted reward, it would still be a gift out of God's favour to the creature. Adam's prefall obedience should be understood to be the leading measure of his trust in God.
- 2. We affirm that Adam's righteousness or "justification" prior to the fall was a righteousness of his own, though our typical use of the word "justification" applies it to our post-fall forensic justification in Christ. The reward granted to Adam prior to the fall would indeed have been a reward for his obedience within the terms of his relationship with God, that is, a meritum ex pacto that consists in claiming the promises that God is already holding out. In our view, Adam could not have merited his reward by strict justice outside of any covenant terms because that would require the creature to produce something entirely of his own (ex nihilo, as it were). But everything, including the terms of Adam's pre-fall relationship with God, is a gift of God (1Co 4:7).

Turretin writes, "From these [foregoing considerations] we readily gather that there now can be no merit in man with God by works whatsoever, either of congruity or of condignity . . . Hence it also appears that there is no merit properly so called of man before God, in whatever state he is placed. Thus Adam himself, if he had persevered, would not have merited life in strict justice, although (through a certain condescension [synchatabasin]) God promised him by a covenant life under the condition of perfect obedience . . ." (Turretin, Institutes, 2.712; also quoted in URCNA Report of the Synodical Study Committee on the Federal Vision and Justification, footnote 52).

- We agree wholeheartedly with Godfrey & Venema's thesis. Our confessions clearly teach that Christ alone fully merited our salvation and that God imputes to his elect both the active and passive obedience of Christ.
  - a. Although the debate generated by Piscator about the imputation of the active obedience of Christ was subsequent to the composition of the BC and HC we affirm that these should be understood to affirm the doctrine, on the grounds that the *textus receptus* of the BC, as improved by the Synod of Dort 1618-1619, clearly affirms the doctrine in Article 22, "he imputes to us all his merits and as many holy works as he has done for us and in our place." We note also the closing of HC 23.60, "He grants these to me . . . as if I myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for

- me." Our Form for Lord's Supper celebration also includes, "By his perfect obedience he has for us fulfilled all the righteousness of God's law."
- b. At the same time we caution against pressing the term "passive obedience" too far, for it does not mean that Christ was not active in pursuing the cross for our sakes, but that he *suffered* for us as the Paschal Lamb. In this case the word "passive" should be understood according to its shared root with the word "passion," as in the "passion [=suffering] and death" of Christ.
- 4. We agree that in the decisive matter of the believer's justification, law and gospel are antithetical concepts. Indeed, to affirm this is fundamental to our salvation, as the various confessional references in this thesis affirm (see further our comments on the role of faith in justification below under Covenant of Grace, Consideration 7). Yet we also affirm that in the language of Scripture the gospel is to be "obeyed" and even includes threats (Jo 3:36, Re 3:14-22, 2Th 1:8, Latin & French of CD 5.14). Scripture thus also speaks of the "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2; 1Co 9:21). Scripture teaches us, too, that the law or Torah is a wonderful instruction of the LORD that is full of promises (Ps 119, Eph 6:2-3). Thus, we caution against an arbitrary dichotomization of Scripture texts containing commands into "law" and those containing promises into "gospel."
- 5. We wholeheartedly agree that we may use the language of merit for Christ's work. We humbly and earnestly confess that Christ has merited our entire salvation. He is our only Saviour, given by grace alone and to be received by faith alone.
- 6. Venema and Godfrey have affirmed that "everything that constitutes a necessary and sufficient basis for affirming a pre-fall covenant of works in distinction from a post-fall covenant of grace is set forth in the Three Forms of Unity." This would seem to imply that all confessors of the TFU must affirm the distinction and perhaps also the terms "covenant of works" and "covenant of grace."

On the one hand, we agree in affirming the distinction and disjunction between the pre-fall and post-fall situations. Indeed, we affirm a radical discontinuity that must be strongly emphasized so as to avoid Pelagian errors. Without doubt the fellowship in Paradise could not be restored by man himself; it was done and gone *unless* it was restored through Another, a Mediator, and by faith in him. Adam and Eve died spiritually "on that day," and were thrust permanently from the fellowship in body and soul that they enjoyed with God in the Garden. That fellowship will not be restored fully until our Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory to bring in the new creation.

On the other hand, we do not hold each other to the term "covenant of works," since the TFU do not require the term. We note that the Westminster Standards also use "covenant of life" (WLC, 20) and speak of the covenants of works and grace as "commonly called" (WLC, 30), implying that other terms are possible. Indeed Reformed theologians have affirmed

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the radical discontinuity between the pre- and post-fall situations by using other terms for the first covenant such as the covenant of nature or creation (Ursinus), covenant of friendship (Burgess, Ball), legal covenant (Sedgwick), covenant of favour (de Graaf), Adamic administration (Murray), and covenant of love (Stam), among others; as well as terms for the second covenant such as the covenant of reconciliation (Burgess, Ball), covenant of grace (the commonest term), covenant of the gospel (Davenant), or evangelical covenant (Sedgwick). Such terminology can be discussed within the bounds of the TFU, and we should grant each other room for this.

In conclusion, we are in unity with our URC brothers in affirming the uniqueness of Adam's relationship to God pre-fall compared to his and humanity's situation post-fall. In other words, Adam's situation while in a state of righteousness yet able to sin (posse peccare) was radically different from our situations in the states of unrighteousness wherein we can only sin (non posse non peccare) and of justification by grace through faith wherein we are enabled not to sin (posse non peccare).

# Key Considerations concerning the Covenant after the Fall, or the Covenant of Grace

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Concerning Questions 2 & 3 and Theses on the Covenant of Grace [Venema & Godfrey]

- 1. Concerning the relationship between the covenant of grace and election, it is clear that the two are not identical even though they are connected to each other in significant ways. To mention but one obvious difference, election is a decree that God made before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4), while the covenant of grace is a relationship initiated by God after the fall and in history (Gen 15:18). Furthermore, not every child of the covenant is elect (Rom 9:6-13). In this sense, there is a certain duality in the covenant: there were both elect and reprobate among the circumcised in the OT, just as there are both elect and reprobate among the baptized in the NT. Another way of expressing this is that the circle of the covenant is larger than the circle of the elect.
- 2. The more challenging question is: what is the best way to describe the aforementioned duality in a scripturally responsible and pedagogically effective way? Over time various terms have been proposed: external and internal, administration and essence (substance), or conditional and absolute. Although these terms attempt to express the truth of the previous point (#1 above), they do have limitations. For example, the following can be mentioned:
  - a. although not decisive in and of itself, it is noteworthy that these terms do not appear in Scripture or our confessions;
  - although the proponents of these terms often wish to prevent it, it
    does happen that the dual aspect of one covenant becomes, for all
    intents and purposes, two distinct covenants in the minds of God's
    people—an external covenant and an internal covenant—while
    our confessions speaks of one covenant of grace (BC 34; LD 27;
    CoD 1:17) with two dispensations, old and new (LD 27);
  - these terms can leave parents in the pew, who are holding their just-baptized baby, in a state of uncertainty, wondering whether their child is *really* in the covenant or not;
  - d. these terms do not always do full justice to the scriptural reality of covenant breakers and profaners (Lev 26:15; Deut 31:16,20; Mal 2:10; Heb 10:29): if someone is only externally or conditionally in the covenant can he *truly* break it?
- 3. Considering the aforementioned limitations, it is helpful to take another look at the terminology that is found in Scripture, namely, that of the blessings (Deut 28; Gal 3:7-14) and the curses (Deut 29:1, 9-14; Gal 3:15-18) of the covenant. These passages shift our attention from aspects of the covenant to outcomes of life within the covenant. Clearly, there are two different outcomes for covenant people, those who be-

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lieve "are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith" (Gal 3:9) and those who do not embrace Christ by faith are under the curse (Gal 3:13-14). In this way, there is a clear confession of one covenant, while the two outcomes express the duality which was already mentioned in point #1 above.

- 4. At the same time, there is more than a difference in outcomes (#3 above), there is also a difference in the way that individual believers live *within* the covenant. Someone can merely "go through the motions" and live within the covenant in a merely external and superficial manner. This is ungodly hypocrisy. Conversely, someone can live within the covenant genuinely, that is to say, from the heart in true dedication to, and with fellowship with, the Lord. This is the way it should be. Yet both kinds of people can be found within the covenant, as the apostle Paul indicates in Rom 2:28-29. Here an analogy may help. The Lord compares his covenant with his people to a marriage covenant (Jer 31:32, Eph 5:22-33, etc). Just as a couple can be truly and legally married yet not live together in true harmony and love, so too people may be truly and legally part of the covenant, but not live in genuine faith and love toward the LORD.1
- 5. In addition much can be gained by emphasizing the two parts of the covenant: promise and obligation (Gen 17:4, 9; Form for Baptism). If the preacher emphasizes both parts, in the right order and in a balanced way, his congregation will not walk away with the impression that one is automatically saved simply because he is baptized. Furthermore, the obligation is, in the first place, a call to trust the LORD and believe in the covenant promises he has given, and then, flowing out of that to also live a life of holiness (LD 23-24, 32-33).
- 6. The doctrine of election should not overshadow the doctrine of the covenant in such a way that doubt, rather than assurance, is cultivated in the hearts of God's people. Believing parents who bring their covenant child forward to be baptized should be certain that their child belongs truly—not merely possibly or potentially—to the covenant of grace. Along the same lines, the maturing Christian should be fully convinced of the reality of God's promises for him, as well as the reality of his obligations toward God, rather than constantly questioning whether he is elect or not, or whether he is actually in the covenant or not. In this respect, the concluding paragraphs of the Canons of Dort regarding "the consolation of afflicted souls" are very much to the point. We read the Canons of Dort precisely to underline the divine origin, full efficacy, and transforming and preserving power of God's sovereign grace, leading us to assurance rather than doubt.
- 7. With respect to the role of faith, we need to distinguish carefully between justification and sanctification. With respect to justification, faith relies entirely upon, and accepts, the free gift of Christ's perfect righteousness, satisfaction and holiness. This is what we confess when

we say that we are saved only by faith and without any merit of our own (LD 23, 32). With respect to sanctification, faith produces the fruits of good works, as described in the letter of James and summarized in BC 24 ("We believe that this true faith... regenerates him and makes him a new man.")

Considerations concerning Question 4 and Theses on the Covenant of Grace [Venema & Godfrey]

- BC 29 clearly speaks of hypocrites who are in the church but not of the church. The CanRCs not only confess this truth with the mouth but also believe it with the heart (to borrow some language from BC 1). Thus, the issue is not with confessing the truth that there are hypocrites in the church, or in the covenant (see #4 above), but rather how this sad reality is best described in theological terms. Here the CanRCs tend not to use the terms invisible and visible church. To begin with, such terminology is found neither in Scripture nor in our confessions. In addition, past experiences, particularly in the Netherlands in the time surrounding the Liberation of 1944, have taught us that speaking of an invisible church can lead to a certain pluriform view of the church which, practically speaking, often compromises the truth we confess in BC 28, namely, everyone's duty to join the church, being active members within it and respecting the authority of local office bearers. In short, the CanRCs have no difficulty with using the in the church but not of the church distinction, but we generally avoid the terms invisible and visible church for the reasons stated above.
- Concerning the translation of BC 29, we do not think there is any significant issue here. The sentence in question reads: "With respect to those who are members of the Church, they may be known by the marks of Christians; namely, by faith, and when, having received Jesus Christ the only Saviour, they avoid sin, etc" (URCNA Psalter-Hymnal) or "Those who are of the church may be recognized by the marks or Christians. They believe in Jesus Christ the only Saviour, flee from sin, etc" (CanRC Book of Praise). The question revolves around the presence of the word "when" (Fr. quand). First of all there is a textua issue that adds a certain wrinkle in the translation history of this sentence. The original text of 1561 did not have quand ayans recue un seul Sauveur lesus Christ, but rather ce qu'ils reçoyvent un seul Sauveur lesus Christ. Now, the textus receptus (Synod of Dort 1618-19) certainly does have quand, but the different word choice between the original and the textus receptus already indicates something about the semantic force of the word quand in that sentence. In that case the word is not suggesting that church members must at a certain point in time receive the Lord Jesus Christ in some kind of special conversion experience. Rather, it is logically connecting the various marks, or indications, that ought to be noticeable in the life of a sincere Christian specifying that the works of sanctification are not simply parallel with

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the gift of faith, but flow from it. We fully agree with this, as is clear from many other places in the confessions. Whether the word *quand* is there (as in the *textus receptus* & URCNA Psalter Hymnal) or not there (as in 1561 edition & CanRC translation), the meaning of the sentence remains the same. As a matter of interest, an earlier translation of the BC used in CanRC had the word "when" in it (see *Book of Praise* 1972). The word "when" was removed in a linguistic and stylistic revision in the early 1980s. We have consulted some internal archive documents of that revision process, and we have the distinct impression that the change was made simply for linguistic reasons (i.e., ease of English expression) and not theological reasons.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In its main lines, this is also what L. Berkhof, citing G. Vos, is saying on pp 286-87 of his Systematic Theology. It also coheres well with K. Schilder's emphasis on the legal reality of the covenant, even if the communion within the covenant has not yet flourished due to immaturity (in the case of infants) or is being rejected in unbelief (in the case of hypocrites). See Schilder's Main Points of the Doctrine of the Covenant, esp pp 3, 11-12.

Appendix #4 NOTES

# Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity

June 11, 2014

To: the Councils of all Canadian and American Reformed Churches Esteemed brothers:

At the recent Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) held at Visalia, California from June 2-5, 2014, a colloquium (learned discussion) was held on covenant views in the United Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). A one-hour colloquium was held on the floor of Synod between Dr. Ted VanRaalte and Dr. Jason VanVliet of the CanRC and Dr. Robert Godfrey and Dr. Cornel Venema of the URCNA. A one-hour question period followed this, allowing for questions from delegates to Synod Visalia. This colloquium was held at the suggestion of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) of the URCNA.

Prior to the colloquium, the two URCNA brothers wrote a paper outlining what they perceived to be the prevalent view within the URCNA, and the two CanRC brothers wrote a paper outlining what they perceived to be the prevalent view within the CanRC. It was made clear at the colloquium that two men cannot speak for an entire federation but that what was presented was fairly representative of the federation. The papers were the basis for the discussion at the colloquium. These papers were distributed to all the Councils of the URCNA federation prior to Synod Visalia. Herewith we as coordinators for church unity are distributing the papers to all the Councils of the CanRC. We waited with doing so until after the colloquium took place because the colloquium was only a proposal from CERCU and this proposal first had to be adopted by Synod Visalia.

When reading the papers, you will notice that there are no significant differences regarding covenant views. The colloquium itself also led to no disagreement, and the four participants concluded that we are on the same page regarding covenant views. The colloquium was a very positive experience and helped to clear up misunderstandings. Both of the undersigned were present at the colloquium and attended Synod Visalia for its duration as fraternal delegates representing the CanRC. We received much positive feedback about the colloquium from the delegates of Synod. There was talk of an audio recording of the colloquium and the question period; if this becomes available, it will in all likelihood be posted on the website of the URCNA at www.urcna.org. May our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, use the colloquium to move the URCNA and the CanRC closer together in our unity talks.

Synod Visalia also dealt with a recommendation from the advisory committee of Synod which dealt with the CERCU report to the effect that Synod encourage CERCU in its plans to recommend to Synod 2016 that

NOTES	the URCNA proceed to Phase Three A of church unity this would mean that, should the churches approve of the tion in 2016, CERCU would begin the <i>Development of a This was "tabled indefinitely,"</i> which according to <i>Robert's means that Synod Visalia did not want to adopt or demendation, choosing instead to postpone a decision about sion shows that the URCNA is not ready to proceed furth steps toward merger at this time. While this decision is of us as CanRC, we can be thankful that the recommendaties that the tabled indefinitely. With the time remaining in coordinators for church unity, we will continue to build related but tabled indefinitely. With the time remaining in coordinators for church unity, we will continue to build related the American section of the URCNA, and we will try to be ecumenism, as we have been doing. We will see how the to bless our efforts in the future.  Synod Visalia did adopt a recommendation of the additions of the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) they be changed before the PJCO can be adopted for a united fed the churches seek to bring such concerns to Synod 2016 ture to their Classes.  Furthermore, Synod Visalia, in keeping with Synod iterated that each Classis and Consistory continue to e of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCanRC ministers to fill pulpits, inviting CanRC represental seeking open dialogue with CanRC brothers regarding areas of concern, organizing joint events with CanRC contending joint conferences, and writing columns to foster orstanding and affection.  As we look back over the years, we realize that there is ual but steady movement toward one another. The colincreasing contact as coordinators with churches and Clahas built relationships and deepened awareness of the remember in your congregational prayers the efforts towarthe LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vaintended to the conclusions that can be drawn from it are another towarthe LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vaintended to the conclusions that can be dra</i>
	Brotherly greetings,  Rev. William den Hollander  Rev. Clarence J. VanderVelde

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process toward has been a gradloquium and the n that road. Our asses in the USA CanRC. Please rd unity. "Unless n" (Ps 127:1).

# Appendix #5 Article in Clarion after Synod Visalia

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# Synod Visalia 2014 of the URCNA

By Rev. Clarence J. VanderVelde

Close to 250 men met at the beautiful and spacious facilities of the Trinity United Reformed Church at Visalia, California from June 2-5, 2014 for the Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). With temperatures hovering around 100 degrees Fahrenheit outside, the men met inside the comfortably air-conditioned facilities to deliberate and decide on the matters before Synod. Synod was marked by the warmth of brotherly fellowship and a very efficient handling of the matters on the agenda. It was the first Synod in the history of the URCNA which was finished one day ahead of schedule.

As fraternal delegates representing the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) at Synod Visalia 2014, Rev. William den Hollander and I enjoyed much good fellowship with the URC brothers as we attended Synod Visalia for its duration. With two delegates present from each congregation, it is a good opportunity for us as coordinators for church unity to interact with people from all regions of the federation. In addition to the speech by Rev. den Hollander bringing greetings from our federation, the highlight for us as CanRC was the one-hour colloquium (learned discussion) which took place on the floor of Synod by Dr. Robert Godfrey and Dr. Cornel Venema from the URCNA and Dr. Ted VanRaalte and Dr. Jason VanVliet from the CanRC (Article 50). The topic was covenant views. A one-hour question period followed the colloquium, allowing for questions from delegates to Synod Visalia. This colloquium was held at the suggestion of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) of the URCNA. The purpose was to help clear up misunderstandings and to see what the differences are when it comes to prevalent covenant views in the URCNA and the CanRC.

Prior to the colloquium, the two URCNA brothers wrote a paper outlining what they perceived to be the prevalent view within the URCNA, and the two CanRC brothers wrote a paper outlining what they perceived to be the prevalent view within the CanRC. It was made clear at the colloquium that two men cannot speak for an entire federation but that what was presented was fairly representative of each federation. The papers were the basis for the colloquium at Synod. These papers were distributed to all the Councils of the URCNA federation prior to Synod Visalia.

The colloquium papers indicate no significant differences regarding covenant views and the colloquium itself also led to no disagreement, with the four participants concluding that we are on the same page regarding covenant views. The colloquium was a very positive experience and helped to clear up misunderstandings. As representatives of the CanRC, we re-

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ceived much positive feedback about the colloquium from the delegates of Synod. The colloquium papers can be read at the website of the URCNA at www.urcna.org and have also been sent to the Councils of all Canadian and American Reformed Churches by your coordinators for church unity. There was talk of an audio recording of the colloquium and the question period; if this becomes available, it will in all likelihood be posted on the website of the URCNA.

In dealing with the CERCU report, the advisory committee of Synod recommended that Synod encourage CERCU in its plans to recommend to Synod 2016 that the URCNA proceed to Phase Three Step A of church unity with the CanRC; this would mean that, should the churches approve of this recommendation in 2016, CERCU would begin the Development of a Plan of Union. This was "tabled indefinitely," which according to Robert's Rules of Order means that Synod Visalia did not want to adopt or defeat this recommendation, choosing instead to postpone a decision about it (Article 53, Recommendation 9). This decision shows that the URCNA is not ready to proceed further with concrete steps toward merger at this time. While this decision is disappointing for us as CanRC, we can be thankful that the recommendation was not defeated but tabled indefinitely. With the time remaining in our mandate as coordinators for church unity, we will continue to build relationships within the American section of the URCNA, and we will try to cultivate a will to ecumenism, as we have been doing. We will see how the LORD decides to bless our efforts in the future.

Synod Visalia did adopt a recommendation of the advisory committee that the churches seriously consider which, if any, specific articles or stipulations of the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) they believe should be changed before the PJCO can be adopted for a united federation, and that the churches seek to bring such concerns to Synod 2016 by way of overture to their Classes (Article 73, Recommendation 10). Synod instructed the PJCO committee to wait with doing further work on the PJCO until after a decision to enter Phase 3A with the CanRC (Article 69, Recommendation 1).

Furthermore, in keeping with Synod Nyack 2012, Synod Visalia reiterated that each Classis and Consistory continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCNA by inviting CanRC ministers to fill pulpits, inviting CanRC representatives to Classes, seeking open dialogue with CanRC brothers regarding any outstanding areas of concern, organizing joint events with CanRC congregations, attending joint conferences, and writing columns to foster our mutual understanding and affection (Article 26, Recommendation 12).

In other news from Synod Visalia, we pass on that Rev. Richard Bout was elected to serve as Missions Coordinator. Rev. Bout had served as a church-planting missionary in Mexico for the past fifteen years and was awaiting a call after repatriating (Article 66, Recommendation 8, Article 84, Recommendation 8). His task will be to offer support and direction to the various church-planting projects of the URCNA, both abroad and at home. Two Councils are prepared to supervise Rev. Bout as Missions Coordina-

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tor: one of them will take on this task.

Furthermore, Synod adopted a Psalm Proposal of the 150 Psalms to be the Psalter portion of the new songbook for the URCNA. (About twenty of these Psalms are Genevans from our *Book of Praise*.) This Psalm Proposal was the joint effort of a URCNA committee and an Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) committee (Article 32, Recommendation 4). An OPC General Assembly meeting at the same time elsewhere also adopted this Psalm Proposal. The work on the Hymn section is ongoing and is expected to be completed in time for Synod 2016 (Article 32, Recommendation 7).

Synod Visalia also decided to invite the OPC to hold its 2016 General Assembly at the same time and place as the next Synod of the URCNA (Article 32, Recommendation 11). The grounds are that this would be an expression of unity as sister churches in Christ, an expression of appreciation for the OPC invitation to join them in the production of a new songbook, and an opportunity to hold a joint discussion on the songbook should both assemblies desire to do so. It was decided that Synod 2016 will be held in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area.

As we look back over the years, we realize that the process toward merger between the CanRC and the URCNA has been very slow, but we also realize that there has been a gradual but steady movement toward one another. The colloquium and the conclusions that can be drawn from it are another step on that road. Our increasing contact as coordinators with churches and Classes in the USA has built relationships and deepened awareness of the CanRC. Please remember in your personal and congregational prayers the efforts toward unity. "Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Ps 127:1).

# Reports to General Synod Dunnville 2016

**CCU Theological Education Subcommittee** 

# Committee for Church Unity Theological Education Subcommittee Report to General Synod Dunnville 2016

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Esteemed Brothers:	
Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ	
Synod 2013 decided "to reappoint the Theological Education Subcommittee, should an upcoming URCNA synod re-appoint the corresponding committee and to continue with the mandate as given by Synod Burlington 2010."	
That continuing mandate was as follows:	
The "theological education committee [is] to reexamine and discuss with our brothers in the URCNA the possibilities of operating at least one theological seminary by and for the churches, to ensure that such a seminary is accountable to and properly governed by the churches. Further, that the committee promotes adequate funding for such an institution(s) by means of an assessment per communicant member.	
The Theological Education Committee [is] to encourage the brothers of the URCNA to examine and interact with the biblical, historical and practical reasons for operating one institution for the training for the ministry as described in Appendix 1 of the report of the Joint Committee, summarized in Lord's Day 38 (Question and Answer 103) and regulated in Article 19 CO of the CanRC.	
However, our brothers in the United Reformed Churches did not mandate a committee with whom we could discuss these matters. Therefore we never convened, and can only report that there has been no progress in this matter.	
With Christian greetings:	
J.L. van Popta: convenor K. Veldkamp G.H. Visscher B. Faber	

# Reports to General Synod Dunnville 2016

Report of the Liturgical Forms and Confessions Subcommittee for Church Unity

# LITURGICAL FORMS AND CONFESSIONS SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE FOR CHURCH UNITY REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD DUNNVILLE 2016

B. II	$\circ$	FC
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October 7, 2015

Esteemed brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

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

#### 1. Mandate

Synod Carman gave the undersigned the following mandate (*Acts*, Art 130):

"...to be available to review and compare the Creeds, Confessions, Forms and Prayers of the CanRC and the URCNA with a view to merger."

#### 2. Committee activities

Our committee learned that the latest Synod of the United Reformed Churches of North America (Visalia, 2014) continued the course set by previous URCNA Synods, namely, to work in close conjunction with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to develop a joint Psalter Hymnal, a work which would include joint versions of the forms, prayers, ecumenical creeds and the Three Forms of Unity. The URCNA Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee received no mandate to connect with, let alone work with, our committee. Though we made ourselves available to our URC counterparts, we received no material that we could "review" or "compare".

The URC Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee will finalize its report to the next URC Synod later this year, and their committee has graciously offered to send us a copy. While we appreciate the gesture, we do not anticipate that our counterparts in the URC will invite our committee "to review and compare" their work "with a view to merger." If they make this request, we have every intent to satisfy that invitation and then as yet send to Synod Dunnville a supplementary report.

#### 3. Analysis

It was the hope within the Canadian Reformed Churches that merger with the URC would occur in the foreseeable future. We received our mandate with a view to expediting that desired merger.

However, the challenge for our committee was that at their recent synod the URC affirmed their desire to keep working toward 'an eventual merger' (*Acts Synod Visalia*, p 26), but they have not given their Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee a clear mandate to work with the Can-RC. This is an issue that needs focused attention if we all desire to keep

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	NOTES	working toward an eventual merger. Until the URC committee receives such a mandate, it makes one wonder what the value is of having our own Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee dedicated to (an aspect of) this merger. Three years ago Synod Carman weighed this question, and considered that "it is advisable to have a committee available to meet with its URCNA counterparts, should the URCNA committee be mandated by its next synod to work together with the CanRC committee" (Consideration 3.2). Given that we do not know how the work of the joint URC and OPC committee will be received within the URCNA, perhaps it is wise to remain available for another inter-synodical period.
		4. Recommendations
		We humbly recommend that Synod Dunnville
		<ol> <li>Reappoint a Liturgical Forms and Confessions subcommittee of the CCU, with the mandate to be available to review and compare the Creeds, Confessions, Forms and Prayers of the CanRC and the UR- CNA with a view to merger;</li> </ol>
		<ol> <li>Ask the CCU to speak with CERCU about the possibility that the URC synod would once again mandate their Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee to work in closer conjunction with its CanRC counterpart.</li> </ol>
		Respectfully submitted,
		C. Bouwman (convener) T. Van Raalte J. Van Vliet
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# Reports to General Synod Dunnville 2016

Report of the Church Order Sub Committee to Synod Dunnville 2016

1.1	landate	NOTES
Re	garding mandate, Synod Carman 2013 decided:	
4.6	To reappoint the current committee with the mandate to continue working with the church order committee of the URCNA:	
	4.6.1 To make further changes to the Church Order and the Forms for Discipline in light of the letters received from the churches;	
	4.6.2 To finalize the synodical regulations.	
	(Acts of General Synod Carman 2013, Article 149, p. 187):	
2.	The Committee and its activities	
	The committee members are Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen, Mr. Gerard J. deman, Rev. John VanWoudenberg (convener), and Dr. Art Witten. ce Synod Carman 2013 the committee met five times.	
	Since Synod Carman 2013 the committee did not have any face to face etings with the URCNA committee members. Near the end of November 3 the committee sent the URC brothers a letter containing:	
1)	a copy of Article 149 of Synod Carman, including our mandate;	
2)	a copy of the <i>modus operandi</i> that we adopted to fulfill our mandate (see section 4 below);	
3)	a request to indicate if they have received any input from any URCNA churches that will require further negotiation;	
4)	a recommendation that we have a joint meeting early in 2014.	
me the ind	esponse the URC brothers indicated that they were not ready for such a eting given that CERCU was busy with efforts to stimulate unity between two federations that would utilize PJCO 2012. The committee therefore cated appreciation for these developments, a willingness to "wait and what develops", and a readiness to help in whatever way it could.	
	Mandate to make further changes to the Church Order in light the letters received from the Churches (4.6.1)	
	Synod Carman 2013 considered the following:	
3.2	. Because it is not in the purview of Synod to do the joint committee's	
	work and because these is no apparent urgency to finalize the PJCO, the letters from the churches that deal with minor matters in the PJCO	
	2012 should be referred back to the Church Order subcommittee for consideration and evaluation.	
3.3	Some letters deal with major items and require input and direction from Synod, including the following`	
	Article 7 (et al) – Place of Deacons…	
	Article 7 – Examination of Ministers from Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship	

NOTES	Article 26 – Church Visitors  Article 43 – Admission to the Lord's Supper  Article 57 – The Reception and Departure of Members  This led to mandate 4.6.1 (a).
	<ul> <li>To carry out this mandate the committee reviewed both the Synod Carman directives as well as the letters sent by the churches to Synod 2013 regarding the PJCO. It did so with the following <i>modus operandi</i>:</li> <li>1. Where these directives or input convince us that provisions in PJCO 2012 could/should be modified, we will propose modifications for negotiation with the URC brothers;</li> <li>2. Where these directives or input do not convince us that provisions in PJCO 2012 ought to be modified, we will explain our rationale to General Synod 2016 and/or remind this Synod of rationale that has already been submitted to previous synods.</li> <li>See the following attached documents</li> <li>1. Attachment 1: "Response to the directives"</li> </ul>
	<ol> <li>Attachment 1: "Response to the directives"</li> <li>Attachment 2: "Other items from the letters of the Churches"</li> </ol>
	4. Mandate to make further changes to the Forms for Discipline in light of the letters received from the Churches (4.6.1)
	Synod Carman 2013 considered the following:  3.2. Because it is not in the purview of Synod to do the joint committee's work and because there is no apparent urgency to finalize the PJCO, the letters from the churches that deal withthe proposed Forms for Discipline should be referred back to the Church Order subcommittee for consideration and evaluation.
	3.6The committee notes that the proposed forms still quote from the NIV 1984, but highlights this as a matter for further review  This led to mandate 4.6.1 (b)
	The committee noted the letter of Carman West dated Feb 1, 2013 and hoped to discuss this with the URC brothers, but was not able to do so.  The committee hoped to meet with the URC brothers to fulfill this mandate, but was not able to do so.
	5. Mandate to finalize the synodical regulations (4.6.2)
	<ul> <li>Synod Carman 2013 considered the following:</li> <li>3.2. Because it is not in the purview of Synod to do the joint committee's work and because there is no apparent urgency to finalize the PJCO, the letters from the churches that deal withthe draft synodical regulations should be referred back to the Church Order subcommittee for consideration and evaluation.</li> <li>This led to mandate 4.6.2</li> </ul>

The committee considered the input from Abbotsford to the effect that neither the PJCO nor the draft regulations themselves indicate how the regulations might be changed. The committee decided to note that as a "to do item" as we continue to work on the regulations.

The committee hoped to meet with the URC brothers to fulfill this mandate, but was not able to do so.

#### 6.Decisions of URCNA Synod Visalia 2014 re. PJCO

#### 6.1. Report of the URCNA PJCO committee to Synod Visalia

The report of the URCNA PJCO committee to Synod Visalia was very short. Following is the most pertinent paragraph: "Since the last synod, no information was brought forward by United Reformed Churches regarding the Proposed Synodical Regulations for use in a joint federation. Given this lack of feedback to the committee from the churches, and uncertainty about how to proceed in cooperation with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the committee did not meet since last synod. The PJCO Committee understands that the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) is proposing a specific recommendation to Synod Visalia for the PJCO's continued work toward unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches" (Acts of Synod Visalia, p. 186).

#### 6.2. Report and Recommendation of CERCU to Synod Visalia

CERCU served Synod Visalia with a number of recommendations regarding the PJCO (Acts of Synod Visalia, pp. 175-176):

**Recommendation 10**: "That Synod receive for information the announcement of CERCU that it plans to recommend to Synod 2016 that we proceed to Phase Three A of church unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches that, should the churches approve of this recommendation in 2016, we would begin the *Development of a Plan of Union*."

**Recommendation 11:** "That Synod urge the churches to seriously consider which, if any specific articles or stipulations of the PJCO they believe should be changed before it can be adopted for a united federation, and seek to bring such concerns to Synod 2016 by way of overture to their classis."

**Recommendation 12**: "That Synod approve the cooperation of the PJCO Committee with CERCU for the working on as yet unresolved difficulties that will be encountered in formulating a plan of union."

**Recommendation 13**: "That Synod continue to encourage each classis and consistory to continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCNA by inviting Canadian Reformed ministers to fill our pulpits, inviting Canadian Reformed representatives to our classis meetings, seeking open dialogue with Canadian Reformed brothers regarding any outstanding areas of concern, organizing joint events with Canadian Reformed congregations, attending joint conferences, and writing columns to foster our mutual understanding and affection.

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#### Grounds:

- a. Those who have been involved in the process of facilitating greater unity have been profoundly impacted with the spirit of unity. Throughout the process, further dialogue has consistently resulted in warm and cordial relationships and misconceptions have been dispelled.
- b. This would be an encouragement to the Canadian Reformed Churches who through their synodical communications have expressed their willingness to continue working through the challenges involved in seeking unity.
- c. Our own unity as emerging URCNA churches was formed through much of these kinds of relations and interactions before our own official start together."

#### 6.3. Pertinent Decisions of Synod Visalia

- 1. Synod Visalia adopted recommendation 13 above (Acts of Synod Visalia, Article 26).
- 2. Synod Visalia tabled indefinitely the following recommendation from its advisory committee (Acts of Synod Visalia, Article 53):

"That Synod encourage CERCU in its plans to recommend to Synod 2016 that we proceed to Phase Three Step A of church unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches so that, should the churches approve of this recommendation in 2016, they would begin Development of a Plan of Union.

#### Grounds:

- a. This is consistent with the mandate given to CERCU.
- b. While this decision does not prejudice any decision in 2016, it does encourage the committee to do the work of presenting this matter for our consideration in 2016.
- c. This would also encourage the consistories to do the work of writing overtures and communicating with the committee on this matter."
- 3. Synod Visalia adopted the following recommendation from its advisory committee (Acts of Synod Visalia, Article 69):
  - That Synod instruct the PJCO Committee to await further work on the PJCO until after the anticipated decision at the next Synod concerning the proposal to enter Phase 3A with the CanRC. Ground:

The PJCO work properly belongs to Phase 3A and we are not yet in Phase 3A with the CanRC.

4. Synod Visalia adopted the following revised recommendation from its advisory committee (Acts of Synod Visalia, Article 73):

That Synod urge the churches to seriously consider which, if any, specific articles or stipulations of the PJCO they believe should be changed before it can adopted for a united federation; and seek to bring such concerns to Synod 2016 by way of overture to their classes.

Grounds: NOTES

- a. This is consistent with the decision of Synod 2012 as reflected in Article 53.4 and 53.5 of the Acts of Synod 2012.
  - Article 53.4: That Synod accept for continued study the Proposed Joint Church Order 2012 as the Church Order for a united federation of the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Canadian Reformed Churches.
  - ii. Article 53.5: That Synod strongly encourage the churches to review Proposed Joint Church Order 2012 and inform them that suggested changes should be directed to Synod by way of overture through the classis.
- b. This will be an effective way to address concerns from the consistories related to this pursuit of unity.

#### 6.4. Comments on these reports and decisions

While we were pleased with the positive introduction and set of recommendations that CERCU submitted to Synod Visalia, we were disappointed and confused by the decisions of Synod Visalia itself.

Synod Visalia, in Article 53, decided to "table indefinitely" the recommendation of its advisory committee to "...encourage CERCU in its plans to recommend to Synod 2016 that we proceed to Phase Three Step A of church unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches so that, should the churches approve of this recommendation in 2016, they would begin Development of a Plan of Union" (see 6.3 above). If our understanding is correct, "tabling indefinitely," particularly in an American context, means "to postpone consideration indefinitely." We find this very disheartening! Does this not indicate that the unity process, at the very least, is "indefinitely on hold"?

It is true that Synod Visalia, in a subsequent article (Article 73), adopted a recommendation of its advisory committee to "instruct the PJCO Committee to await further work on the PJCO until after the anticipated decision at the next Synod concerning the proposal to enter Phase 3A with the CanRC." It appears that this "anticipated decision," however, refers to the very decision that was "tabled indefinitely."

On a positive note, Synod Visalia did not disband its PJCO committee.

We find these decisions confusing and contradictory. In any case, they have the effect of putting our work "in limbo." These decisions also made it difficult for the committee to even come to a recommendation as to whether or not the Canadian Reformed Churches should even maintain a PJCO committee. In the end we deemed it prudent to perhaps at least have a PJCO committee available if Synod Wyoming 2016 does in fact decide to proceed to Phase 3A. We also decided to suggest that Synod Dunnville mandate the CCU coordinators to seek clarification from CERCU regarding this "limbo situation."

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NOTES	7. Conclusion The committee thanks the Lord for the work that it could do. We pray that the Lord will bless our efforts as we move forward as federations towards full unity.
	8. Recommendations
	<ol> <li>The committee recommends that:         <ol> <li>Synod thanks the committee for the work it has completed;</li> <li>Synod accepts our report and recommendations as a response to the mandate given by Synod Carman and therefore also refrains from entertaining further changes to the PJCO at this time.</li> <li>Synod mandates the CCU coordinators to seek clarification from CERCU regarding the "tabled indefinitely" situation.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Synod reappoints the committee (perhaps with an additional member for continuity down the road) and mandate it to resume its work as mandated by Synod Carman 2012 only if Synod Wyoming 2016 pursues Phase 3A or mandates their joint CO committee to take up contact with us.</li> <li>Appendix</li> </ol>
	In order to perform its work given by Synod Carman 2013 the committee incurred a total of \$ 0.00 in expenses.
	Respectfully submitted, G. Nederveen G. J. Nordeman J. VanWoudenberg (convener) A. Witten

### Attachment 1: Response to the "Directives" from General Synod Carman 2013

#### **NOTES**

#### 1. Re. Article 7 et al of PJCO 2012: Place of Deacons

General Synod Carman 2013 (Article 149) stated the following: "Surveying the PJCO 2012 as a whole, it can be observed that the place of deacons seems to have been marginalized, without any rationale provided for this change. This is at odds with what we confess in Belgic Confession Article 30, where the elders, deacons and pastors together "form the council of the church." As Aldergrove states, "The inclusion of the deacons in all aspects of Reformed Church government accords much better with our historical practices and roots dating as far back as Synod Emden 1571." Articles in the PJCO where the deacons have been removed from the corresponding articles in our present Church Order include 7, 11, 15 and 56. The joint committee should work toward reinstating the role of the deacons within these articles."

After pondering this matter the committee decided to point out to General Synod 2016 that although General Synod 2013 clearly was sympathetic to what Aldergrove suggests, the committee is not convinced by Aldergrove since Aldergrove's suggestion:

- 1. does not go back to Dort as we were mandated to;
- 2. does not interact with the report sent to General Synod 2010 which provisionally adopted PJCO 2010 without giving special directives about this matter:
- 3. goes beyond even what we currently have in our current CanRC CO, as the following examples show:
  - 3.1. Re. PJCO 21, Ecclesiastical Assemblies. Aldergrove wishes to include reference to the deacons because "Deacons are involved in many of the governing aspects of the church especially the Ministry of Mercy and therefore should be recognized as part of the "Ecclesiastical assemblies"." This, however, does not reflect our current CanRC CO 29.
  - 3.2. Re. PJCO 22, The Consistory. Aldergrove wishes to include reference to the deacons because "Maintaining a strong diaconal presence in the consistory serves the congregation in a better way. There must be close cooperation between deacons, elders and minister. Otherwise, we end up promoting the notion that the minister and the elders take care of "spiritual" needs and the deacons of the "practical." Including the deacons in this Article would be in line with Article 30 of the Belgic Confession." This, however, does not reflect our current CanRC CO 38 or 39.
  - 3.3. Re. PJCO 24, Instituting a New Church. Aldergrove wishes to include reference to the deacons because, "Churches should not be instituted without deacons. This proposal reflects current practice

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	NOTES

as seen in the history of most CanRC churches." Such a stipulation, however, goes beyond our current CanRC CO 40 and 41.

The committee also decided to further serve Synod 2016 with the following interaction with Aldergrove's submission to Synod 2013:

#### 1.1. Interaction with Aldergrove's Submission to Synod 2013

The church of Aldergrove is of the opinion that the inclusion of the deacons in all aspects of Reformed Church Government accords much better with our historical practices and roots dating as far back Synod Emden 1571. It argues that this inclusive approach is displayed in our current Church Order and in the Belgic Confession (Article 30).

With regards to Art. 30 of the Belgic Confession your committee reiterates its position as stated in our report to Synod 2013.

Particularly from the Canadian Reformed sources we received input that the deacons should be considered part of the consistory to prevent the danger of hierarchy by the elders over the deacons. The input appealed particularly to Article 30 of the Belgic Confession which includes the deacons under the term "council" and speaks of the work of the council in terms of governing. We decided, however, not to add the deacons to the consistory since the office of deacon is not one of ruling or governing the church. This is also in line with the Church Order of Dort.

Regarding the term "council" in Article 30 of the Belgic Confession, the original Dutch version does not call it "the council" but says that it functions as a council (als een raad) of the town. The term "council" itself has reference to "civic bodies of government (cf. Idzerd VanDellen and Martin Monsma in The Revised Church Order Commentary, p. 111 (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1967)). The Belgic Confession, therefore, as a confession of testimony to the outside world, compares the government of the church to a civil government for illustrative and explanatory reasons. To use the terminology of this comparison to suggest that therefore the deacons too have a ruling office is improper. In fact, consistency in using this comparative terminology to say that Article 30 of the Belgic Confession stipulates that the office of deacon includes "governing" necessitates saying that Article 30 also stipulates that the office of elder includes ensuring "that the poor and all the afflicted are helped and comforted according to their need." Both matters are found in the same context. Scripture, however, is clear: governing belongs to the office of elder, and caring for the poor belongs to the office of deacon.

In PJCO 2007 we used the term "council" throughout the articles of the Church Order, and further specified in Article 22 that "the term council designates not an assembly of the church, but a meeting of the elders and minister(s) with the deacons under the authority of the consistory,

at which matters are dealt with as stipulated by the Church Order or as assigned by the consistory." We reverted back to the terminology of "consistory with the deacons" given what is stated in the paragraph above about the term "council" as well as the following considerations:

- Though the terminology "consistory with the deacons" is perhaps more cumbersome than the term "council," it is less confusing;
- The terminology fits with the terminology used in the Dort Church Order:
- The term "council" gives credence to the mistaken view that the deacon's office is a ruling office;
- The popular conception of the authority of "the council" as the highest governing body in the church, even over the consistory, is a concern. In times past the deacons were considered part of the consistory, and had a lot of power.

In addition to this, the committee wishes to stress how the Form for Ordination differentiates between the offices. The mandate of the elders in supervising and governing the church is quite distinct from the task of the deacons in the ministry of mercy. Consequently the charge given to the elders is very distinct from the charge given to the deacons. This difference is carefully maintained by Dort and in the PJCO.

As to the request by Aldergrove to bring the PJCO into harmony with the current CanRC church order, we remind the churches that the PJCO is a combined product based on the mandate that the Joint Committee draft a Church Order along the principles of Dort.

Dort makes a clear distinction between the Consistory and the Consistory with the Deacons. It never refers to consistory with the deacons as Council, which only makes the distinction more pronounced. According to Dort:

- The consistory is an ecclesiastical assembly (Art. 29). Consistory is made up of ministers and elders (Art. 37). Deacons are not mentioned. Deacons <u>may</u> be added to the consistory if consistory is very small (Art. 38).
- Ministers and elders are to carry out supervision of fellow office-bearers and exercise discipline where necessary (Art. 16 and 23). The role of the deacons is the ministry of mercy and they are to give account to consistory (Art. 25).
- Ministers who refuse to subscribe to the Three forms of Unity are de facto suspended by the consistory (Art. 53)
- 4. When suspension of office-bearers is necessary, this is done by the preceding sentence of the consistory (Art. 79)
- 5. The only instances where the consent of the Consistory with the Deacons "as a team" is required is when a minister accepts a call elsewhere (Art. 10) or at the election of elders and deacons (Art. 4, 5).

#### NOTES


NOTES	As a result of our investigation of the specific articles that Synod 2013 instructed the committee to review (Art. 149, 3.3) we make the following observations based on the grounds given by Aldergrove in its correspondence to Synod 2013:
	Article 7 PJCO 2012
	Calling a Minister from Outside the Federation  A minister from a church with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship  A minister from a church with whom the federation does not maintain ecclesiastical fellowship shall be declared eligible for a call within the federation only after becoming a member of a congregation in the federation, after an adequate period of consistoria supervision determined by his consistory, and after sustaining the examination as prescribed in the relevant section of the Ecclesiast cal Examination for ministers from outside the federation.
	Aldergrove proposal: "after an adequate period of supervision determined by his consistory with the deacons"
	Ground: Calling of minister(s) has always involved the deacons and they can give their unique practical perspective which elders do not always have. See current Art 5.b. I and PJCO 2012 Art 6. If we needlessly eliminate deacons from Article 7, it will be easy to argue in the future that they should also be removed from the provision Article 6 (PJCO) any longer. (sic)
	CO Committee Comment: Aldergrove has not taken note of the 2 step approach of the PJCO. The consistory is to supervise the member with a view to being ready for the calling process to begin.  Once the process begins, the deacons become involved in the calling of that man.
	Article 11 PJCO 2012 Temporary Release
	If because of illness or other substantial reasons, a minister requests a temporary release from his service to the congregation, he shall receive the same only with the approval of the consistory with the deacons. If the duration of the release is greater than one year, the consistory shall obtain the concurring advice of classis. He shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation.
	Aldergrove proposal: "If the duration of the release is greater than one year, the consistory with the deacons shall obtain the concurring advice of classis."

<b>Ground:</b> Because the first part of this same Article (PJCO) has the consistory with the deacons already dealing with it.	NOTES		
CO Committee Comment: This request for concurring advice of classis does not require the involvement of the deacons. Their involvement was to grant the temporary release in the first place and their involvement may be required again depending on the advice received.			
Article 15 PJCO 2012			
Subscription to the Confessions			
Each office-bearer shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity			
by signing the Form of Subscription. Anyone refusing to subscribe shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone in office refus-			
ing to subscribe shall, because of that very fact, be immediately			
suspended from office by the consistory, and if he persists in his			
refusal, shall be deposed from office.			
Aldergrove proposal: "Anyone in office refusing to subscribe shall because			
of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory <u>with the deacons</u> "			
consistory <u>with the deacons</u>			
Ground: This change would bring Article 15 into harmony with Article			
26 of our current Church. Order (Article 26). Deacons should be involved in such acts of discipline an office-bearer since they are			
also office-bearers.			
CO Committee Comment: It is true that CanRC CO 26 includes the			
deacons in this act. However, Dort does not, and we share the view of our			
URCNA counterparts that this is not really the task of the deacons. Also,			
our mandate is not to bring PJCO in harmony with our current CanRC CO, but to draft a Church Order along the principles of Dort.			
and to drain a charact along the principles of Both			
Article 18 PJCO 2012			
Protecting Doctrinal Purity  To protect the congregation from false teachings and errors			
which endanger the purity of its doctrine and conduct, ministers			
and elders shall use the means of instruction, refutation, warning,			
and admonition, in the ministry of the Word, in Christian teaching, and in family visiting.			
Aldergrove proposal: "to protect the congregation from false teachings			
and errors which endanger the purity of its doctrine and conduct, ministers, elders <u>and</u> deacons"			
<b>Ground:</b> As office-bearers in the church, deacons have a duty to guard the truth of the gospel.			

NOTES	<b>CO Committee Comment:</b> Aldergrove fails to differentiate between the offices. Ministers and elders as the overseers are charged to protect the congregation by means of instruction etc.	
	Article 19 PJCO 2012	
	The Duties of Deacons  The duties belonging to the office of deacon consist of  The deacons shall ordinarily meet monthly to transact the business pertaining to their office, and they shall render a regular account of their work to the consistory. The deacons may invite the minister to visit their meetings in order to acquaint him with their work and request his advice.	
	Aldergrove proposal: and they (the deacons) shall render a regular <u>financial</u> account of their work to the consistory <u>with the</u> deacons"	
	Ground: This change reflects historic practice and avoids giving the impression that deacons operate 'under' the consistory when in reality they are "with" the consistory.	
	CO Committee Comment: Aldergrove's suggested change does not reflect historic practice. Our current CanRC CO 42 and the PJCO reflect the historic Dort.	
	Article 21 PJCO 2012	
	Ecclesiastical Assemblies  A. Identification  Among the churches of the federation, four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod. The terms classis and synod designate either ecclesiastical assemblies or ecclesiastical regions. As assemblies, classes and synods are deliberative in nature, and exist only for the duration of their meetings.	
	Aldergrove proposal: "four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory with the deacons"	
	Ground: Deacons are involved in many of the governing aspects of the church especially the Ministry of Mercy and therefore should be recognized as part of the "Ecclesiastical assemblies"	
	CO Committee Comment: This does not reflect Dort 29 nor even our current CanRC CO 29.	

Article 22 PJCO 2012	NOTES
The Consistory In each church there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders, which shall ordinarily meet at least once a month. The consistory is the only assembly which exercises authority within the congregation, since the consistory receives its authority directly from Christ.	
Aldergrove proposal: "In each church there shall be consistory composed of the minister(s), elders and <u>deacons</u> " And further: "The consistory with the deacons is the only assembly which exercises authority"	
Ground: Maintaining a strong diaconal presence in the consistory serves the congregation in a better way. There must be close cooperation between deacons, elders and minister. Otherwise, we end up promoting the notion that the minister and the elders take care of "spiritual" needs and the deacons of the "practical." Including the deacons in this Article would be in line with Article 30 of the Belgic Confession.	
CO Committee Comment: This view does not reflect Dort 37 nor even our current CanRC CO 38 or 39.	
Article 24 PJCO 2012	
Instituting a New Church  A church shall be instituted with its first consistory only under the supervision of a neighboring consistory and with the concurring advice of the classis.	
Aldergrove proposal: "A new church shall be instituted with its first consistory with the deacons	
Ground: Churches should not be instituted without deacons. This proposal reflects current practice as seen in the history of most CanRC churches.	
CO Committee Comment: If Aldergrove's suggestion is that the deacons are part of an ecclesiastical assembly as the governing body, we refer to our comments regarding PJCO Articles 21 and 22 and our earlier comment about the distinct charges given to elders and deacons in the Form for Ordination. What the PJCO proposes is completely in line with Dort and is a combination of articles 40 and 41 our current Church Order.	

NOTES	Article 56 PJCO 2012
	The Suspension and Deposition of an Office-bearer  When a minister, elder, or deacon has committed a public or grievous sin, or when he refuses to heed the admonitions of his consistory, he shall be suspended from the duties of his office by his own consistory with the concurring advice of the consistories of the two neighboring churches.
	Aldergrove proposal: "he shall be suspended from the duties of his of- fice by his own consistory with the deacons."
	Ground: Inclusion of the deacons in discipline of fellow office-bearers (whether deacons or elders) is stipulated by our current Church Order (Art 71). No reason has been given to exclude them from this responsibility. There is no reason to exclude them from this process. They should work with the elders when there is need to suspend or depose someone from office.
	CO Committee Comment: It is true that CanRC CO 71 includes the deacons in this act. However, Dort does not, and we share the view of our URCNA counterparts that this is not really the task of the deacons.
	2. Re. Article 7, "Examination of Ministers from Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship"
	General Synod Carman 2013 (Article 149) stated the following: "Several churches point out that, according to the PJCO 2012, ministers coming to our federation from a sister church need to undergo a complete examination at classis, whereas presently a colloquium is held. If we take seriously our ecclesiastical relationships and the ordinations that take place in sister churches, there is no need for this provision in our Church Order and a colloquium would be sufficient.
	<ul> <li>In reviewing this matter the committee considered the following:</li> <li>The churches bring forward specific cases that indeed show that a modified candidacy exam simply does not fit here;</li> </ul>
	<ol> <li>The examination was crafted to serve as a safety in cases of federations in ecclesiastical fellowship with uncertain orthodoxy. The real place to address this concern, however, is in the rules of ecclesiastical fellowship;</li> </ol>
	3. The term "colloquium" is not even in the PJCO anymore.
	<ul><li>The committee therefore decided:</li><li>1. To bring this matter to the URC brothers, suggesting that we craft an</li></ul>
	examination that is not just a modified candidacy examination, and is more specific to the situation at hand;

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2.	To craft a Colloquium Doctum proposal for consideration by the joint committee: see appendix 1 attached	NOTES
3. I	Re. Article 26, "Church Visitors"	
two we abl	General Synod Carman 2013 (Article 149) stated the following: "The actice of making church visitations on an annual basis (instead of every by years, as in the PJCO 2012), should be upheld. When things are going II, the visits appear routine. However, it is beneficial to be held accountee on an annual basis, to be encouraged and challenged and to receive dance for complex local situations."	
fron as Fla	While considering this the committee also considered the following input in the churches. Aldergrove noted that being accountable to each other sister churches is an important part of what it means to be a federation. In the most of the control o	
our	world has become more fast paced and complex.  The committee came to the following considerations:	
1.	It needs to be kept in mind that the PJCO has not been crafted to change the current Canadian Reformed Church Order, but to serve in a new federation of churches which will be composed of churches that have had different practices when it comes to frequency of church visitation.	
2.	The matter of "best frequency" is a judgment call, and it needs to be kept in mind that in the new federation there will likely be classes in which the churches will be separated by considerable distances.	
	e committee therefore decided not to approach the URC brothers with a posal for a revision on this article.	
nui refe pro or	Re. Article 43, "Admission to the Lord's Supper"  General Synod Carman 2013 (Article 149) stated the following: "A mber of churches wrote about the current wording of this article, which ers to the consistory admitting "visitors who profess the Reformed faith wided that it secures from them a satisfactory testimony in either written verbal form about their doctrine, life and church membership." There artinues to be concern that an individual guest may give a verbal testimo-	

ny about his own doctrine, life and church membership, while the greater responsibility to provide such a testimony should rest with the visitor's consistory. However, as Synod Burlington 2010 noted, "The elders of the local church are directly responsible for the doctrine and life of their members. Visitors, on the other hand, constitute 'exceptions' and it needs to be understood that 'exceptions' are always hard to regulate... The admission of visitors from churches with which we maintain ecclesiastical fellowship is best served by a letter of testimony, but it should be understood that very few churches in North America are familiar with such a practice" (Acts. Article 151). Nevertheless, because of the biblical principle of establishing truth on the basis of two witnesses, the joint committee ought to consider making an addition to the wording of the proposed article to reflect a preference for a written testimony about the member from his consistory.

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In further reflecting on this matter the committee came to the following considerations:

- 1. While the CanRC committee members could easily adopt what General Synod 2013 suggests, we are hesitant to bring this up again since we have gone around the mulberry bush so often with this matter. We feel that we've gotten the best we could get;
- 2. The word "preferably" is weak, especially in a Church Order;
- 3. The word "written" is before "verbal:" this already states the preference. The committee therefore decided to not approach the URC brothers for further revision on this article.

#### 5. Re. Article 57, "The Reception and Departure of Members"

General Synod Carman 2013 (Article 149) stated the following: "There is concern with the provision in this article that, "Departing members remain under the supervision and care of the consistory until they are received as members into [the receiving] church." The committee notes the role of the individual "to come under the care of other elders of another church," but stresses that the elders also have a responsibility and that there should be no time when a member is not under supervision. The joint committee needs to consider the point that this makes it difficult for the sending church to maintain interim oversight of a member who moves a great distance from their current church."

In reviewing this matter the committee came to the following considerations:

- It is true that we cannot have supervision at a distance, but that is not the intent. The point of this article is to prevent people from asking for an attestation in order to disappear from the scene;
- 2. The point really is not "transfer of membership" but "transfer of spiritual care" from one body of elders to another. You never put this spiritual care in the hands of an individual.
- 3. True, the role of the person is important: he/she is responsible to make the decision to come under the care of other elders of another church. The elders, however, also have a responsibility. There should be no gap or time when a sheep is not under oversight. The important part here is "continuing care."

The committee therefore decided to not approach the URC brothers for further revision on this article.

Appendix 1 NOTES

### Reason for seeking revision of exam requirement re PJCO 2012, Art 7 part 1

Synod 2013 received several letters from churches objecting to the requirement in Art 7, part 1 that a minister from a church with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) needs to undergo an examination at the candidacy level. Some of the reasons for the objection are:

- The calling church has called a minister in good standing. The requirement for the call include two documents that require the following:
  - Letter of the consistory of the church from which he is leaving concerning his doctrine and life, his ministerial service, and his honorable release from his service in that church:
  - Letter from the classis within which he last served concerning his honorable release from that classis. (See below: Section A. Documents 3 and 4)
- 2. If a minister from a church in EF is permitted to preach in the churches of the federation, then he does not need to be examined by the churches to become a minister. He is one.
- 3. As churches in a federation we need to honour the fact that we have EF with others and not disregard the EF by subjecting the minister who has been called to an examination at the level of a candidacy exam. He is not seeking entrance into the ministry; he is in the ministry and is called by a church who seeks his services. Therefore the onus on making sure the man is fit for the task lies with the calling church.
- 4. If the calling church has done due diligence with regard to the minister's ability to preach, to prepare biblical sermons based on sound exegesis, his ability to teach the youth and his faithfulness in his pastoral work and his own personal life with the Lord, then his competency of these things are known to the calling church and the brother does not need to be examined on these points. He is called as a minister in good standing in one of the churches in EF.
- 5. Historically the "examination" consisted of a colloquium doctum for ministers coming from another federation. This covered the two key areas: doctrine and church polity. During a discussion about doctrine the churches can find out what the man believes (including his knowledge of confessions and creeds), and a discussion on church polity will highlight differences in practice and the minister's comprehension of the CO of the federation he is joining. A colloquium at this level should be sufficient.

With these points in mind we suggest that the ecclesiastical examination be known as a Colloquium Doctum and suggest the following changes to Art 7 and the Colloquium Doctum requirements:

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#### Article 7 (part 1)

#### Calling a Minister from Outside the Federation

A minister from a church with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to serve a church within the federation only after sustaining a colloquium doctum as prescribed in the relevant section of the Ecclesiastical Examination for ministers from outside the federation.

# Colloquium Doctum for a Minister from a Church with Whom the Federation Maintains Ecclesiastical Fellowship

(cf. Article 7 part 1)

#### A. Documents:

- 1. A letter of call
- 2. A letter of acceptance
- Letter from the consistory of the church from which he is leaving concerning his doctrine and life, his ministerial service, and his honorable release from his service in that church
- 4. Letter from the classis within which he last served concerning his honorable release from that classis
- 5. Letter from the consistory of the church which he is joining concerning proper announcements made to the congregation for its approbation of the call.

#### B. Procedure and Content:

- The calling church shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis with its request that the colloquium be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
- 2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
- 3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
- 4. In this colloquium Classis shall focus on:
  - Reformed doctrine: his knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
  - Church Polity: his knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time to ask questions after each area of the colloquium. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

- 8. Classis shall declare that the minister has sustained his colloquium upon:
  - a. the affirmative vote of classis, and
  - b. his promise to sign the form of subscription upon installation.
- 9. A minister who does not sustain his colloquium may undergo the above colloquium again by a subsequent classis upon the request of the calling church.

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NOTES	Attachment 2: Other items from the letters of the Churches to General Synod Carman 2013 (unfinished business to be discussed with the URC church order committee counterpart)
	The committee decided to discuss matters and to seek revision of the PJCO with the URC brothers on the following matters.  1. To agree with Grand Valley that "been" is missing in PJCO 25 B: the phrase should read, "that no matters have been submitted by"  2. To agree with Grand Valley that for the sake of consistency the pronouns used in reference to God in PJCO 45 should not be capitalized.  3. To agree with Carman West that the terminology of "with a consistory" in PJCO 21 D would be improved with "from a consistory."  4. To agree with Carman West that "shall be convened" is better than "shall convene" in PJCO 28 given that this fits better with Regiona Synod not being a permanent body, and that this wording is in line with PJCO 30 regarding General Synods
	<ul> <li>To agree with Abbotsford that the question of whether or not churches are honouring the decisions of the major assemblies should be added to PJCO 25. This matter is very important; the fact that this is mentioned in Foundational Statements 10 and PJCO 21 E and PJCO 31 is not sufficient.</li> </ul>
	6. To agree with Abbotsford that neither the PJCO nor the draft regulations themselves indicate how the regulations might be changed. We should take note of this as a "to do item" as we continue to work on the regulations.
	7. To agree with Abbotsford that in the Guideline for Appeals to General Synod, the sentence, "An appeal is a written request for a judgment regarding a matter previously decided upon by a regional or general synod" could better be written as "An appeal is a written request for a judgment regarding a matter decided upon by a previous regional or general synod."
	<ul> <li>The committee decided to discuss matters and to seek revision of the examination regulations with the URC brothers on the following matters.</li> <li>To agree with Flamborough and Elora that the examination regulations should stipulate that the decision to proceed to the next part of the</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>exam should be made in closed session.</li> <li>To agree with Abbotsford, Aldergrove, Flamborough, and Elora that the ecclesiastical examination for a minister coming from a church with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship needs work. The current examination regulation does not contend sufficiently with the reality of ecclesiastical fellowship; A colloquium doctum would be more appropriate.</li> </ul>
	<ol> <li>To agree with Elora that the examination regulations should stipulate that the "practica" ought to be done in closed session. This would serve to protect the integrity of the brother.</li> </ol>

<ol> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol>	To agree with Abbotsford that the examination regulations are not clear on how often classis has to vote. What constitutes a section? Does a classis vote after each part of the exam? Should this be left up to each classis? Should the voting be done in closed session? Should the voting be done with a show of hands? If the purpose of voting is simply to ascertain whether sufficient information has been gathered, then what is the point of setting time limits? If within the time limits classis cannot decide, is there not a problem? This should all be discussed with the URC brothers.  To agree with Surrey's observation of inconsistency between the Candidacy Examination and the Ordination Examination (final paragraph	NOTES
	of point 7). This should be addressed with the ordination examination following the wording of the candidacy examination since the wording of the latter is superior.	
The ters	committee decided to not seek revisions regarding the following mat-	
1.	Re. support of needy students: Grand Rapids and London made suggestions forgetting that the PJCO is designed for a combined federation.	
2.	Re. the suggestion of Grassie to add "concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod" in the first part of PJCO 12: this is not necessary as the phrase already appears in PJCO 12 c.	
3.	Re. the suggestion of Surrey regarding PJCO 12 d to change "eligibility for call" to "availability for call" since all ministers are already eligible for call. The point is that even though the man has been released from his duties within the congregation he served, he is still eligible for call because he was not deposed from office.	
4.	Re. the suggestion of Surrey that "in accordance with God's Word" is better than "principles taught in God's Word" since it is simpler, more comprehensive, and reduces the need to decide first what principles are in view. Something may be in accordance with the Word of God without being a principle.	
5.	Re. the puzzlement of Surrey about why PJCO 18 is a separate article since its contents belong with PJCO 3 and 17. PJCO 3 and 17 focus on protection from "within" (like CanRC 16, 22) while PJCO 18 focuses on protection from the outside (like CanRC 27).	
6.	Re. Abbotsford's contention of an inconsistency between PJCO 21 D and the decision of Synod Burlington to allow churches to approach synod directly. This forgets that the PJCO is for a combined federation.	
7.	Re. Surrey's suggestion that PJCO 25 A needs a clause just like PJCO 28 about convening a classis sooner if needed. Classis is to be convened every four months while Regional Synod once a year.	
8.	Re. Flamborough's desire to stipulate annual church visitation. This has already been dealt with.	

NOTES	9. Re. Flamborough's and Grand Valley's reservations re. PJCO 26 regarding the phrase "and they shall admonish those who have been negligent. The phrase is in CanRC 46.
	10. Re. Surrey's suggestion to change "they shall admonish" to "they shall fraternally admonish" in PJCO 26. The word "fraternally" occurs earlier on already.
	11. Re. Surrey's suggestion that the first sentence of PJCO 52 A 2 should be improved linguistically: true, it is a run on sentence but the meaning is sequential and clear.
	<ol> <li>Re. Surrey's suggestion that "No Lording it over" (PJCO 54) should be moved to section II. It is in section III in the Dort CO and in the CanRC CO.</li> </ol>
	13. Re. Surrey's suggestion that the last sentence of PJCO 58 is unnecessary. PJCO 58 highlights how property exists and how it is managed. Should there be a disagreement on how it is managed, the management of the property is governed by its own rules and that is made clear with the last line. This is necessary as a safeguard.
	14. Re. questions from Grand Rapids, Langley, and Lynden about the PJCO being "provisionally" adopted. It should be noted that "provisional" in this context means "providing union happens between the federations."
	15. Re. Carman West's view regarding the synodical regulations that once the convening church has examined the credentials and reported the results to the meeting of delegates, then there is nothing further to report. The convening church cannot report to a synod that is not yet constituted; its last act, therefore, is to give its report to synod that is now in session.
	16. Re. Carman West's view regarding the synodical regulations that the phrase that the chairman "shall state matters of fact" should be either clarified or deleted in light of the fact that prior to that there already is the phrase, "he shall place before synod every motion that is properly made and seconded, etc." There is no problem here as these actions go in tandem.
	17. Re. Abbotsford's request that the committee give attention to the matter of incorporation. Our committee has flagged this for synods twice already.
	18. Re. Abbotsford's concern that the PJCO decentralizes financial assistance given to seminary students while the CanRCs have recently centralized it. This fails to recall that the PJCO is for a new federation.
	19. Re. Abbotsford's concern that the report makes no mention of previous CanRC Synod decisions about speaking an edifying word. This fails to recall that the PJCO is for a new federation.
	20. Re. Abbotsford's suggestion that laying on of hands could be done by "the executive of the consistory." This does not square with equality of the office-bearers.

- 21. Re. Surrey's suggestion that foundational statement 16 could be improved linguistically. We fail to see the problem.
- 22. Re. Surrey's questioning of the repeating of "practica" in the ordination examination. Something could have happened between the candidacy examination and the ordination examination and there could also be two different classes (different areas) involved.

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# Reports to General Synod Dunnville 2016

**Needy Students Fund** 



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#### **Section 1 - Executive Summary**

#### Background

General Synod Burlington 2010 founded the *Committee for Needy Students of Theology* (cited herein as the Needy Student Fund *Committee*) as a centralized federal body responsible to work with all member classis of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. The Committee was tasked to administrate financial support for all members of these churches who are enrolled as students at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. (See Section 2 – Synodical Mandate and Support Guidelines) Synod Burlington appointed the Committee to operate under the direction and counsel of the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie. (Acts of Synod 2010 Art. 91.4) The Committee has since endeavoured to fulfill this mandate, and reports back to each successive General Synod. The Committee also reports annually to all member churches regarding funds dispensed and assessments per communicant member for the upcoming calendar year. The last report submitted by the Committee to Synod was to General Synod Carman 2013.

#### **Current Situation**

- i) Funds Dispensed & Students Supported This report will outline developments and funds dispensed between the years Jan 2012 Aug 2014. The Committee has financially supported a total of ten (10) individual students since 2012. Each year the Committee dispensed an average amount of \$120,416.00. Between 2012-2014 a total of \$361,249.00 was granted to eligible students. The Committee endeavours to maintain an account surplus to address emergent or unexpected expenditures as students present them. All funds are held in an account with the Meridian Credit Union. The Committee maintains fiscal accountability by means of dual signatories. Annual audits are performed on year-end Committee financial statements, and reported to the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church Council.
- ii) Assessments Churches continue to be assessed annually based on projected enrolment and anticipated fees. Individual church assessment is calculated on the membership base of the previous year as listed in the annual yearbook of the churches. The Committee sends assessment notices to member churches by November of each year. On occasion, follow-up correspondence is required to ensure payment. Rates per communicant member have remained stable in between \$10.00 \$12.00 over the past three years. It can be noted with thankfulness that all member churches were able to fulfill their annual assessments during the period reviewed by this report.
- iii) Grant Application Process and Student Relationships Students who are eligible for financial assistance are made aware of the Fund and application process by means of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) website. An electronic link directs applicants towards the registrar where they are able to secure appropriate forms

#### NOTES

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and contact information for the Committee. The Committee operates an email account that serves as the primary communication tool with students. Upon receipt of budget requests for aid, visits are scheduled for each student to ensure that giving is conducted in a spirit of humility and brotherly love. This process assists the Committee with confidence that the funds dispensed are being granted to men that are convicted in their path to the ministry. With thankfulness the Committee can report that there is good cooperation and harmony between students and members of the Committee.

#### Summary

The Needy Student Fund Committee continues to be blessed with the requisite financial means to support students preparing for ministry in our Lord's church. We are thankful for God's providing hand, and delight in our task, equipping future pastors and shepherds for His flock. All Praise for these gifts is due to our faithful Father in heaven!

## Section 2 – Synodical Mandate and Support Guidelines

#### NOTES

#### **Committee for the Needy Students of Theology Mandate**

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- 1. The Committee for the Needy Students Fund (Background):
  - a. The Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie, Ontario ("Grassie Church") has been appointed by General Synod Burlington 2010 as the "Committee for Needy Students of Theology" (the "Committee"), responsible for extending financial aid to Canadian and American Reformed students of theology who are in need of financial support, and are enrolled at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (the "Seminary").
  - b. The Consistory with the Deacons (the "Council") of the Grassie Church has appointed a committee consisting of four members of the church plus a liaison to the Council. The Committee will tend to all the day-to-day affairs of the fund.
- The Mandate of the Committee is as follows:
  - a. To propose to the Council a mandate for administering the Fund, and procedures for governing this Committee, within the mandate given by General Synod 2010 to the Grassie Church,
  - b. To propose to Council guidelines for the support of needy students (refer to Synod's recommendations). These guidelines will be developed as we receive feedback from the different classis and will be published at a later date,
  - To establish the need for the support of students prior to each school year. Eligible students are to contact the Committee by August 1 outlining the specifics of their request,
  - d. To annually (each Fall) assess the churches in the Canadian and American Reformed Church federation (the "Federation"), based on the number of communicant members in the current yearbook, in order to anticipate funding required for the upcoming calendar year,
  - e. To report all activities on an ongoing basis to the Council via the Council liaison, and
  - f. To report annually to each church in the Federation of the activities of the Committee. The report to the churches will be completed in the Spring, and will include an audited financial statement. In addition, the Committee will report tri-annually to the General Synod its activities and situation.

#### Committee Structure

a. The structure of the Committee shall consist of a Chairman, a Viceall, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and a Council member as liaison.

NOTES	4.	Duties of Committee Members:
		<ul> <li>The Chairman is responsible for directing the activities of the committee in fulfilling its mandate. The chairman will call a meeting at regular intervals and as required.</li> </ul>
		b. The Vice-All acts as Chairman and Secretary in their absence, and assists the Committee with carrying out its mandate.
		<ul> <li>c. The Treasurer is responsible for managing the receipts and disbursements of funds, and, together with the Chairman and Vice-All, is a signing officer on the bank account. In addition, the Treasurer i. Will be responsible for managing supporting documentation for all expenditures</li> <li>ii. Is to submit a bi-monthly statement of receipts and expenditures to the committee</li> <li>iii. Sets the annual assessment to be submitted to the churches in the Federation, with the Committee</li> <li>iv. Prepares the annual statement in January of each year, and presents it to the Committee for approval, and</li> <li>v. Assists the church appointed auditors in their task.</li> <li>d. The Secretary is to keep minutes of all meetings and to distribute them electronically shortly after the meeting. The secretary shall manage and retain all incoming and outgoing communications. The committee shall approve out-going communications; urgent matters of communication must be reviewed and approved by the Chairman or Vice-All. The approval of out-gong communication does not apply to the matter of miscellaneous correspondence.</li> <li>e. The Liason is to keep Council informed of the activities of the Committee, to relay requests by the Committee for appointments and other matters, and to inform the Committee of decisions of Council that apply to the Committee.</li> </ul>
	5.	Appointments:
		Committee members are appointed by the Council, and will generally serve a four year term, with the option of one additional term at the discretion of Council. Members will generally retire in rotation.
	6.	Auditors:
		Council shall appoint two auditors to examine the books of the Treasurer at the end of each fiscal year.
	7.	Report to General Synod:
		The Committee shall tri-annually submit a report to the Council (eight months prior to the next scheduled General Synod of the Federation), detailing its activities and outcomes, for Council review and submission to Synod in the appropriate timeframe.
		November 15, 2010

#### SUPPORT GUIDELINES

#### NOTES

### for the Needy Students Fund of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches

## Providing financial aid to students of the "Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary"

#### **Preamble**

The primary purpose of financial aid for theological students is to assist in their educational preparation for ministry, by providing aid to those students who demonstrate financial need.

In light of our human nature and that we all need God's Grace and Spirit to guide us, the giving and receiving should be done in a spirit of humility and brotherly love.

Financial aid is administered by the Committee for the Needy Students Fund (the "Committee" and "the Fund", respectively), a committee appointed by the Council of the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church of Grassie. Synod 2010 appointed the Grassie church to administer the Fund.

#### Section 1 Principles

The following principles are basic to the administration of the Needy Student Fund of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches:

- 1.1. Financial aid shall be restricted to theological students of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches who are enrolled at the Theological Seminary of the Canadian Reformed Churches and who desire the office of minister in these churches.
- 1.2. The student has the primary responsibility for his educational and living expenses. The Fund will augment the student's resources where requested by the student, and approved by the Committee. The Fund is to be used as a last resort. Students are expected to utilize existing personal assets (RRSP's, equity, other savings) and family support, either prior to or in concert with any assistance from the Fund.
- 1.3. The Fund will not support requests, either as a whole or for additions to a particular budget line item, where the request is deemed to be excessive and/or unnecessary. Students receiving support are expected to show good Christian stewardship of the funds provided to them, and organize their lifestyle and purchase choices accordingly, in a self-sacrificing manner.
- 1.4. Financial aid will be administered in such a way as to affirm financial responsibility and integrity of both students and fund administration.
- 1.5 The administration of financial aid shall be individual, personal, pastoral, and confidential.

NOTES	<ul> <li>1.6. Applicants may request assistance on an annual basis. All requests must reflect all costs associated with realistic and anticipated living expenses. Requests for additional funds after September 1 of the current calendar year may not be accepted and alternate sources of funds required to cover any shortfall would be the students responsibility.</li> <li>1.7. Students who are supported by the Fund should keep comprehensive records of expenses in each of the categories noted in the application form. In cases of subsequent years of support, these records will validate and support the requested amounts in the student's applications.</li> <li>1.8. Vehicle maintenance will be supported at a monthly rate of \$25, as applicable. Any expenses above and beyond this amount may be reimbursed upon receipt of statement of invoices. Applicants are encouraged to use the most economical means of car repairs wherever possible.</li> <li>1.9. Applicants are expected to take ownership for the cost of their studies. Applicants must recognize that the support for the students is from assessments to communicant members of our churches, many of which themselves struggle at times financially. In addition, all students of post-secondary education relying on conventional means of financial assistance (typically government) do assume the vast majority of the</li> </ul>
	cost for their education. As such, while the Fund is charged with assisting the living needs of the students of the Seminary, it also has a responsibility to the membership.  Section 2 Application Process
	2.1. A student must apply to the Committee substantiating their request for support. The submission shall include a letter of request, as well as a completed Financial Assistance Application form.
	2.2. Students are to submit a request (using the referenced forms) before the first day of August prior to the school year, and provide any other information requested by the committee.
	2.3. If a student is dismissed from the Seminary, he is under obligation to repay the Fund the full amount of aid received with interest at a rate set by the Committee starting at the date of dismissal. In the case of withdrawal from the Seminary, aid received may be required to be repaid upon Committee review.
	2.4. In cases for which this mandate does not apply, the Committee shall ask the advice of the Grassie Council.
	2.5. This document may be reviewed and changed as needed.
	2.6. Normal terms of support are for 9 months of the recognized school year (September – May).

Section 3	Acknowledgement		NOTES
To the Applica	nt:		
plication to adopted b	the Needy Students Fun	to abide by the guidelines for ap- id as outlined in this document and nant Canadian Reformed Church of	
		tact the Council of your home contion, where applicable, and,	
members should en	for support and growth of deavour to live economica	ceiving aid from your fellow church the church, and that therefore you illy, remembering your own respon- ceived by the grace of God, and,	
The under		nditions outlined in this document? hat the information herein given is s financial position.	
Signature of Appl	icant	Date	
Signature of Com	nmittee Chairman, Date	Signature of Committee Clerk, Date	

#### Section 3 – 2012-2014 Financial Statements

#### Needy Student Fund Committee Statement of Receipts and Disbursements for 2014, 2013 & 2012

			,				
		<u>Notes</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>		
Receint	ts (CAD)						
Receipt	Assessments		105,772	123,209	0		
	Investment Income	1	.00,	0,_00	645		
	Refunds to churches for overpayme	ents	-746	-3,254	-392		
	Returns from students	2	211	0	0		
Total R	eceipts		105,237	119,955	253		
Dishure	sements/Expenses						
Diobaic	Student support		119,858	143,426	97,530		
	Bank Charges		20	21	17		
	Committee administration	3	0	185	192		
Total D	isbursements/Expenses		119,878	143,632	97,739		
	Curplus / (dofinit)		14 641	22 677	07 495		
	Surplus / (deficit)		-14,641	-23,677	-97,485		
	Assessment per communicant men	nher	10	12	0		
	No. of students Jan - May	4	6	8	5		
	No. of students Sept - Dec		6	6	8		
	Needy Student Fund Committee Statement of Financial Position as at December 31						
Assets	(CAD) Cash		28,101	42,109	E2 264		
	Accounts receivable Advances to Students		20,101	42,109	53,264		
Total A			28,101	42,109	53,264		
1 :-  - : : : : : : : : : : : : : : : : :	an and Ourmlus						
Liabiliti	es and Surplus Accounts payable						
	Assessments received in advance				7,040		
	Accumulated surplus		28,101	42,109	46,224		
	·		28,101	42,109	53,264		
Natao	4	010: 4 4: 0044					
<u>Notes</u>	1 2	GIC investment in 2011	stimated vehic	olo ropoir			
	2	Disbursement given for estimated vehicle repair, surplus returned when repair completed under-					
	3	budget Pre-certified cheques and office supplies					
	4	Total 10 individuals supp					
	T	i otal To iliulviduals supp	oi teu				

2015 Need Student Fund Committee Membership  Chairperson Br. John Bosscher Vice Chairperson Br. Klaas Harink Secretary Br. Martin Schulenberg Treasurer Br. Ryan Kingma Council Liaison Br. Wolter Vis  For the Committee: Br. John Bosscher, Chairperson NSF Rev. RJ den Hollander, Council Chair, Covenant Canadian Reformed Church	Since 2013 the bers due to tenure e person), br. Bart De thanked for their de Brother John Bosso chairperson, while b Klaas Harink serves br's Ryan Kingma (to The committee cooperation and ha	Committee has experienced a turnover of three mem- expiration. Outgoing members br. Adrian Dieleman (chair- evires (secretary) and br. Bert Wanders (treasurer) are edication and labor in their respective Committee roles. There has moved from Council liaison to the function of ear. Wolter Vis takes up the Council liaison position and br. Es as Vice-Chair. Tenure replacement appointments are ereasurer) and Martin Schulenberg (secretary). Emeets monthly or on an as needed basis. There is good ermony between all members of the committee and the en Reformed Church Council.	NOTES
Chairperson Br. John Bosscher Vice Chairperson Br. Klaas Harink Secretary Br. Martin Schulenberg Treasurer Br. Ryan Kingma Council Liaison Br. Wolter Vis  For the Committee: Br. John Bosscher, Chairperson NSF	2015 Need Stude	nt Fund Committee Membership	
Br. John Bosscher, Chairperson NSF	Chairperson Vice Chairperson Secretary Treasurer	Br. John Bosscher Br. Klaas Harink Br. Martin Schulenberg Br. Ryan Kingma	
	Br. John Bosscher,	Chairperson NSF	