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ACTS

of

General Synod 2016

of the

Canadian Reformed Churches

held at

Dunnville, Ontario

from

May 10-19, 2016



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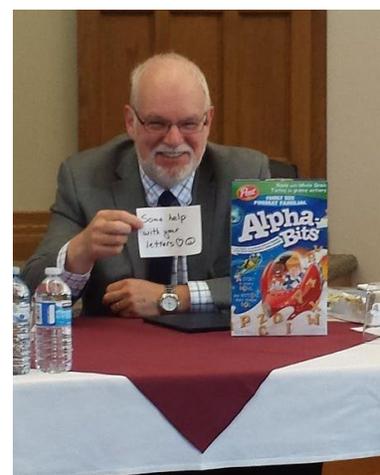


Officers of Synod. From left to right: R.C. Janssen, R. Aasman, R. Schouten, E. Kampen



A Korean moment

All those acronyms





Abbreviations and Nomenclature

When it comes to nomenclature and abbreviations, the practice of the CanRC over the decades has been quite inconsistent. An attempt to anglicize abbreviations in the recent past faltered. At GS 2016 the following principles were followed:

1. All committee names begin with “(sub)committee for”. (E.g. CPTPF).
2. The abbreviation for a subcommittee is the abbreviation of the main committee dash abbreviation of the subcommittee. (E.g. CRCA-SRN, CCU-SCO).
3. Names of churches are shortened to “the PLACE NAME CanRC”. If a church is referred to by further qualifiers, a dash is added to the place name and then the qualifier is added. (E.g. the Aldergrove CanRC, the Neerlandia-North CanRC, the Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC, the Tintern-Spring Creek CanRC).
4. Other church federations are referred to by their name in English. The abbreviation used is the one used in the language of origin. (E.g. The Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ), The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv)).
5. References to acts of general synods are according to the following formula: GS YEAR Art. ### Obs./Cons./Rec. #.#. If there is potential for confusing synods, the denominational acronym is added to GS (e.g. GS-GKv 2014 = the general synod of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands held in 2014; GS-CanRC 2013 = the general synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches held in 2013).

Because various abbreviations have been used over the years, the following list has the most common English and language of origin abbreviations, with notes where church federations have changed names in the course of time.

The following list attempts to cover the abbreviations used in the *Acts* of GS 2016 and GS 2013.

Language of origin	English equivalent	Spelled out
ARC	<i>ARC</i>	American Reformed Church (affiliated with the CanRC)
ARTS	<i>ARTS</i>	Association of Reformed Theological Schools
ATS	<i>ATS</i>	Association of Theological Schools
BBK	<i>RCA</i>	<i>Betrekkingen met Buitenlandse Kerken</i> (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of a Dutch church federation)
BC	<i>BC</i>	Belgic Confession
CanRC	<i>CanRC</i>	Canadian Reformed Church(es)
CBT	<i>CBT</i>	Committee on Bible Translations (for the CanRC)
CBTNIV	<i>CBTNIV</i>	Committee on Bible Translation for the New International Version (of the Bible)
CCCNA	<i>CCCNA</i>	CCCNA Committee for Contact with Churches in North America
CCU	<i>CCU</i>	Committee for Church Unity
CCU-C	<i>CCU-C</i>	Committee for Church Unity - Coordinators



Language of origin	English equivalent	Spelled out
CCU-SCO	<i>CCU-SCO</i>	Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for Church Unity
CCU-STE	<i>CCU-STE</i>	Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for Theological Education
CEIR	<i>CEIR</i>	Committee on Ecumenical and Interchurch Relations (of the OPC)
CERCU	<i>CERCU</i>	Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (of the URCNA)
CGKN	<i>CRCN</i>	<i>Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i> (Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands)
CICR	<i>CICR</i>	Committee on Inter-Church Relations (of the ERQ)
CNSF	<i>CNSF</i>	Committee for Needy Students' Fund
CO	<i>CO</i>	Church Order
CPTPF	<i>CPTPF</i>	Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding
CRCA	<i>CRCA</i>	Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (of the CanRC)
CRCA-SRN	<i>CRCA-SRN</i>	Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad – Subcommittee for Relations with churches in The Netherlands
CRCAus	<i>CRCAus</i>	Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
CRCNA	<i>CRCNA</i>	Christian Reformed Church in North America
CRTs	<i>CRTS</i>	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
CWeb	<i>CWeb</i>	Committee for the Official Website (of the CanRC)
EF	<i>EF</i>	Ecclesiastical Fellowship
ERQ	<i>RCQ</i>	Reformed Church of Quebec / Église Réformée du Québec
ERQ	<i>RCQ</i>	<i>Église Réformée du Québec</i> (Reformed Church of Quebec)
ESV	<i>ESV</i>	English Standard Version (of the Bible)
FCC	<i>FCC</i>	Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
FCS	<i>FCS</i>	Free Church of Scotland
FERC	<i>FERC</i>	First Evangelical Reformed Church (Singapore)
FRCA	<i>FRCA</i>	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA	<i>FRCSA</i>	Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (English is now the preferred language; previously also known as VGKSA)
GGRC	<i>CRCI</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Calvin Reformasi di Indonesia</i> (Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia)
GGRI	<i>RCI</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia)



Language of origin	English equivalent	Spelled out
GGRI-KalBar	<i>RCI-KalBar</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Kalimantan Barat</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the Province of Kalimantan Barat)
GGRI-NTT	<i>RCI-NTT</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timur</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur)
GGRI-Papua	<i>RCI-Papua</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Papua</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the Province of Papua)
GKH DGK	<i>RCR</i> <i>TRC</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken – Hersteld</i> (Reformed Churches – Restored) – recently renamed <i>De Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (The Reformed Churches)
GKN _{vv} GKN	<i>RCN_{tf}</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (voorlopig verband)</i> – Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (temporary federation) Recently named: “ <i>Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland</i> ”
GK _v	<i>RCN</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – vrijgemaakt</i> (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – liberated)
HC	<i>HC</i>	Heidelberg Catechism
ICRC	<i>ICRC</i>	International Conference of Reformed Churches
IPB	<i>PCB</i>	<i>Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil</i> (Presbyterian Church of Brazil)
IRB	<i>RCB</i>	<i>Igrejas Reformadas do Brazil</i> (Reformed Churches in Brazil)
IRC	<i>IRC</i>	Inter-church Relations Committee (of the RPCNA)
IRCK	<i>IRCK</i>	Independent Reformed Church in Korea
KJV	<i>KJV</i>	King James Version (of the Bible)
KPCA-K	<i>KPCA-K</i>	Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin)
KPCK	<i>KPCK</i>	Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (Previously cited as PCK (Kosin))
LRCA	<i>LRCA</i>	Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford
NAPARC	<i>NAPARC</i>	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
NASB	<i>NASB</i>	New American Standard Bible
NGK	<i>NRC</i>	<i>Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (Netherlands Reformed Churches)
NIV/NIV84	<i>NIV/NIV84</i>	New International Version – 1984 Edition (of the Bible)
NIV2011	<i>NIV2011</i>	New International Version – 2011 Edition (of the Bible)
NKJV	<i>NKJV</i>	New King James Version (of the Bible)
NRSV	<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version (of the Bible)
OPC	<i>OPC</i>	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCA	<i>PCA</i>	Presbyterian Church in America
PHC	<i>PHC</i>	Psalter-Hymnal Committee (of the URCNA)



Language of origin	<i>English equivalent</i>	Spelled out
PJCO	<i>PJCO</i>	Proposed Joint Church Order (for a merged CanRC & URCNA)
PRCA	<i>PRCA</i>	Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia
PTP	<i>PTP</i>	Pastoral Training Program (of CRTS)
RCK	<i>RCK</i>	Reformed Churches in Korea
RCNZ	<i>RCNZ</i>	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
RCUS	<i>RCUS</i>	Reformed Church in the United States
RPCNA	<i>RPCNA</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
RSE	<i>RSE</i>	Regional Synod East (of the CanRC)
RSW	<i>RSW</i>	Regional Synod West (of the CanRC)
SCBP	<i>SCBP</i>	Standing Committee for the Publication of the <i>Book of Praise</i>
SIP	<i>SIP</i>	Statement of Institutional Purpose (of the CRTS)
SRN	<i>SRN</i>	Subcommittee for Relations with churches in The Netherlands (subcommittee of the CRCA)
TUK	<i>TUK</i>	<i>Theologische Universiteit Kampen</i> (Theological University in Kampen (of the RCN))
URCNA	<i>URCNA</i>	United Reformed Churches in North America

ACTS
General Synod Dunnville
of the Canadian Reformed Churches
May 10 – 19, 2016

Day 1 — Morning Session
Tuesday, May 10, 2016

Article 1 – Opening of Synod

On behalf of the convening church, the Rev. John VanWoudenberg called the meeting to order, welcoming all present, especially the delegates to GS 2016. He requested all who were present to sing Hymn 23:1,2,3 and then read Philippians 2:1-8. After giving a meditation on this passage (*Appendix 1*), he had the assembly sing Hymn 23:4,5,6 and then led in prayer. He gave opportunity to br. Cornell Feenstra, member of the organizing committee, to address the assembly with some words on the background of the convening church and its surrounding community, as well as information regarding pertinent logistics.

Article 2 – Credentials

The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. Twenty-two primary and two alternate delegates were present and signed the attendance list.

Delegated by Regional Synod West 2015:

Ministers: Richard Aasman, Ryan deJonge, Roelf C. Janssen, Joe Poppe, Robert Schouten, S. Carl Van Dam (alt.)

Elders: Kent Dykstra, Harold J. Leyenhorst, Ben Meerstra, John Roukema, Willem F. van Beek, Jim VanSpronsen

Delegated by Regional Synod East 2015:

Ministers: Douwe G.J. Agema, Dave deBoer, Eric Kampen, John VanWoudenberg, Rodney Vermeulen (alt.), Dick Wynia

Elders: Gerrit Bos, Lammert Jagt, Rick Ludwig, Carl Oosterhoff, Jeff W. Temple, John Vanderwoerd

Article 3 – Election of Officers

The following officers were elected to serve Synod for its duration:

Chairman: R. Aasman

Vice-chairman: R. Schouten

First Clerk: R.C. Janssen

Second Clerk: E. Kampen

Article 4 – Constitution of Synod

On behalf of the convening church, the Rev. VanWoudenberg declared Synod constituted. The elected officers took their places. The Rev. Aasman thanked the assembly for the confidence expressed by voting for the officers of synod. He expressed appreciation to the convening church for all the work done in preparation for synod. The chairman then called for a break to give the executive the opportunity to come with proposals in regard to the proceedings of Synod and the division of tasks among the various members of Synod.

Synod adjourned for lunch.

Day 1 — Afternoon Session
Tuesday, May 10, 2016

Article 5 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present.

Article 6 – Advisory Committees of Synod

The following advisory committees were appointed:

Committee 1. D. Agema (convener/reporter), S.C. Van Dam, G. Bos, H.J. Leyenhorst, J. Roukema. Executive liaison: R.C. Janssen.

Committee for Reformed Churches Abroad (CRCA) Report. 8.2.1-8.2.3.7, 8.3.1 (all letters)
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Committee 2. J. VanWoudenberg (convener/reporter), D. deBoer, R. Ludwig, W.F. van Beek, J. Vanderwoerd. Executive liaison: R. Schouten.

Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) Report. 8.2.4-8.2.4.1, 8.3.2.1-8.3.2.22
Committee for Church Unity (CCU) Report. 8.2.5-8.2.8, 8.3.3.1-8.3.3.6

Committee 3. R. deJonge (convener/reporter), R. Vermeulen, L. Jagt, C. Oosterhoff, J.W. Temple. Executive liaison: E. Kampen.

Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological College (CRTS) Report. 8.1.1, 8.1.3, 8.1.4, 8.2.11, 8.3.4.1-8.3.4.4
Committee for Needy Students' Fund (CNSF) Report. 8.2.16, 8.3.6.1-8.3.6.3
Committee for Pastoral Training Program (CPTP) Report. 8.2.12
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Appeals against GS 2013 Art. 110. 8.6.1.1-8.6.1.17, 8.3.10, 8.6.5.1

Committee 4. J. Poppe (convener/reporter), D. Wynia, K. Dykstra, B. Meerstra, J. VanSpronsen. Executive liaison: R. Aasman.

Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) Report. 8.2.9-8.2.9.1, 8.3.8.1-8.3.8.7, 8.6.2, 8.6.3, 8.6.6.1-8.6.6.2, 8.6.9
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Appeal from the Ancaster CanRC against a decision of RSE 2013. 8.6.10

Committee 5. R. Aasman (convener/reporter), R.C. Janssen, E. Kampen, R. Schouten.

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Request from D.J. Bolt. 8.1.6
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Committee for the Official Website (CWeb) Report. 8.2.15, 8.3.5.1-8.3.5.4, 8.4.2

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Article 7 – Late Submissions

Regarding late submissions the executive recommended the following:

1. Letters from the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (temporary federation) (GKNvv) be declared admissible as the GKNvv would not have been aware of the deadline date.
2. A letter from the Langley CanRC on the CWeb report be declared inadmissible as it is late without a reason provided.
3. A letter from the Subcommittee for Reformed churches in The Netherlands of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA-SRN) be declared admissible as it seeks to correct information in an item already on the agenda of Synod.
4. A letter from the Abbotsford CanRC be declared admissible as it acknowledges the correction of information in an item already on the agenda of Synod.
5. A submission with appendix by the Hamilton-Providence CanRC with appendix be declared inadmissible as it is late without a reason provided.
6. A letter from the Rev. A. Souman regarding his reappointment to synod committees be declared admissible as it is legitimately late.
7. A letter from D.J. Bolt, reporter for the website *Eén in Waarheid*, requesting access to synod proceedings be admitted and be responded to in that he has access to synod proceedings as any member of the public might have.
8. A letter from the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) regarding the appointment of a new member be declared admissible as it is legitimately late.

ADOPTED

Article 8 – Housekeeping Matters

After receiving a proposal from the officers of synod the following was decided:

1. *Presence on the Internet*: Synod will publish the *Acts of Synod* on the church website as they become available. However, as the *Acts* are adopted, Synod will decide whether there are any decisions which should not be immediately posted on the Internet.
2. *Privileges of the floor*: Synod will give the floor to all official representatives of the churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.
3. *Time Schedule*: Monday to Friday
morning session – 9:00 - 12:00
afternoon session – 2:00 - 5:00
evening session – 7:00 - 9:00
4. *Devotions*: Synod shall begin and close each day in plenary session with Scripture reading, prayer and singing. A schedule will be handed out.
5. *Press Release*: A press release shall be published after synod has been closed.
6. *Committees*: Advisory committees shall provide each delegate with a copy of their reports before they are dealt with in plenary sessions.
7. *Synod Documents*: Copies of synod documents are available only to members of synod and fraternal delegates and observers.
8. *Guidelines*: For all procedures the Guidelines for Synod shall apply.



9. *Travel expenses*: Expenses are to be submitted, with receipts, to br. J. Homan. Delegates are to be reimbursed for travel costs at 48 cents/km. This amount is not to exceed the cost of flying.
10. *Roll call*: Roll call shall take place each plenary session by means of a visual check by the executive.
11. *Advisory Committee Reports*: Advisory Committee reports shall be submitted using the template provided.
12. *Clerical services*: The Rev. R.J. Kampen will assist the clerks of Synod in their work.
13. *CRTS Senate*: The executive shall make the necessary arrangements for inviting the Senate of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary for dinner and a plenary session.

Synod adjourned for committee work.

Day 1 — Evening Session Tuesday, May 10, 2016

Article 9 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present.

Article 10 – Agenda

The following agenda was **adopted**.¹

Agenda of General Synod Dunnville 2016

1. Opening on behalf of the convening church
2. Examination of the credentials
3. Election of the officers
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Information from the convening church
 - 5.1 Suggestions for Synod Guidelines
6. Adoption of the agenda
7. Setting of time schedule
8. Incoming mail
 - 8.1 General Matters
 - 8.1.1 Letter from RSW dated November 3, 2015 – Nominations for Board of Governors for the CRTS
 - 8.1.2 Letter from RSW dated November 3, 2015 – Appointments and credentials for delegates to GS Dunnville 2016
 - 8.1.3 Letter from RSE dated November 12, 2015 – Delegates to GS Dunnville 2016, wages claim and recommendations re: Board of Governors for the CRTS
 - 8.1.4 CRTS replacements Board of Governors nominations (Personal & Confidential)
 - 8.1.5 Letter from the Rev. J. and sr. B. VanPopta
 - 8.1.6 Letter from br. D.J. Bolt (reporter *Eén in Waarheid*)

¹ Reference numbers derived from this agenda can be found between brackets in the lists of materials prefacing the decisions of this Synod further on in these Acts, beginning with Article 11.

8.2 Committee Reports

- 8.2.1 Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)
- 8.2.2 CRCA addition to GS 2016 report re: FRCA recommendation 3c
- 8.2.3 CRCA to GS 2016 re: appointments
 - 8.2.3.1 CRCA Subcommittee Reformed the Netherlands (CRCA-SRN)
 - 8.2.3.2 Appendix 1 – Letter Ede to CanRC
 - 8.2.3.3 Appendix 2 – Decisions regarding objections churches abroad (*English*)
 - 8.2.3.4 Appendix 3 – Decisions Men/Women in the church (*English*)
 - 8.2.3.5 Appendix 4 – Account of the Theological University Kampen (TUK) (*English*)
 - 8.2.3.6 Appendix 5 – Responsibilities: TUK, General Synod, and the churches (*Dutch*)
 - 8.2.3.7 Appendix 6 – Decisions regarding the NRC (NGK) (*Dutch*)
- 8.2.4 Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA)
 - 8.2.4.1 Letter re: appointment of committee members
- 8.2.5 Committee for Church Unity (CCU)
- 8.2.6 CCU: Church Order Subcommittee
 - 8.2.6.1 Attachment 1: Response to the “Directives from Synod Carman 2013”
 - 8.2.6.2 Attachment 2: Other Items from the letters of the Churches
- 8.2.7 CCU: Theological Education Subcommittee
- 8.2.8 CCU: Liturgical Forms and Confessions Subcommittee
- 8.2.9 Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP)
 - 8.2.9.1 Supplementary report
- 8.2.10 Inspection of Archives for GS 2013 – the Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC
- 8.2.11 Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS)
- 8.2.12 Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee
- 8.2.13 Days of Prayer
- 8.2.14 Committee for Bible Translation (CBT)
- 8.2.15 Committee for the Official Website (CWEB)
 - 8.2.15.1 Letter re: Nomination of members
- 8.2.16 Committee for the Needy Students Fund (CNSF)
- 8.2.17 General Fund
- 8.2.18 Address Church for the CanRC
- 8.2.19 Archives for General Synod

8.3 Letters from the Churches regarding the reports

- 8.3.1 Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)
 - 8.3.1.1 Subcommittee Reformed churches in The Netherlands (CRCA-SRN)
 - 8.3.1.1.1 The Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC dated February 1, 2016
 - 8.3.1.1.2 The Smithers CanRC dated February 3, 2016
 - 8.3.1.1.3 The Chatham-Ebenezer CanRC dated February 15, 2016
 - 8.3.1.1.4 The Grand Valley CanRC dated March 4, 2016
 - 8.3.1.1.5 The Langley CanRC dated January 16, 2016
 - 8.3.1.1.6 The Ancaster CanRC dated March 7, 2016
 - 8.3.1.1.7 The Fergus-North CanRC dated February 26, 2016
 - 8.3.1.1.8 The Edmonton-Immanuel CanRC dated February 4, 2016
 - 8.3.1.1.9 The Fergus-Maranatha CanRC dated March 17, 2016

- 8.3.1.1.10 The Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC dated March 5, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.11 The Grand Rapids ARC dated March 22, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.12 The Taber CanRC dated March 24, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.13 The Abbotsford CanRC dated March 10, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.14 The Grassie-Covenant CanRC dated March 24, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.15 The Cloverdale CanRC dated March 21, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.16 The Brampton-Grace CanRC dated March 23, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.17 The Elora CanRC dated March 24, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.18 The Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC dated March 28, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.19 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC dated March 29, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.20 GKNvv dated March 23, 2016
- 8.3.1.1.21 GKNvv: copy of general synod press release
- 8.3.1.1.22 GKNvv: copy of letter from GKNvv to DGK
- 8.3.1.2 The Hamilton-Providence CanRC dated February 10, 2016 re: FERC
- 8.3.1.3 The Smithville CanRC dated March 7, 2016
- 8.3.1.4 The Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC dated March 5, 2016
- 8.3.1.5 The Hamilton-Blessings CanRC dated March 19, 2016
- 8.3.1.6 The Flamborough CanRC dated March 21, 2016
- 8.3.1.7 The Lincoln-Vineyard CanRC dated March 22, 2016
- 8.3.1.8 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC dated March 29, 2016
- 8.3.1.9 The Abbotsford CanRC dated March 10, 2016
- 8.3.1.10 The Abbotsford CanRC re: request RCR dated March 10, 2016
 - 8.3.1.10.1 Appendix 1: Report – Committee Reformed Churches Restored
 - 8.3.1.10.2 Appendix 2 From – Deputies Contact Churches Abroad of De Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK) dated Oct. 20, 2015
 - 8.3.1.10.3 Appendix 3 – call to Liberation dated July 17, 2007
- 8.3.1.11 Letter from CRCA-SRN
- 8.3.1.12 Letter from the Abbotsford CanRC
- 8.3.2 Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA)
 - 8.3.2.1 The Orangeville CanRC dated January 22, 2016
 - 8.3.2.2 The Carman-West CanRC dated February 1, 2016
 - 8.3.2.3 The Cloverdale CanRC dated February 15, 2016
 - 8.3.2.4 The Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC dated March 10, 2016
 - 8.3.2.5 The Ancaster CanRC dated March 7, 2016
 - 8.3.2.6 The Fergus-North CanRC dated February 26, 2016
 - 8.3.2.7 The Smithville CanRC dated March 7, 2016
 - 8.3.2.8 The Edmonton-Immanuel CanRC dated February 26, 2016
 - 8.3.2.9 The Fergus-Maranatha CanRC dated March 17, 2016
 - 8.3.2.10 The Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC dated March 5, 2016
 - 8.3.2.11 The Hamilton-Blessings CanRC dated March 19, 2016
 - 8.3.2.12 The Grand Rapids ARC dated March 22, 2016
 - 8.3.2.13 The Abbotsford CanRC dated March 10, 2016
 - 8.3.2.14 The Grassie-Covenant CanRC dated March 24, 2016
 - 8.3.2.15 The Lynden ARC dated March 21, 2016 (letter 1)
 - 8.3.2.16 The Lynden ARC dated March 21, 2016 (letter 2)
 - 8.3.2.17 The Willoughby Heights CanRC dated March 21, 2016



- 8.3.2.18 The Elora CanRC dated March 24, 2016
- 8.3.2.19 The Lincoln-Vineyard CanRC dated March 22, 2016
- 8.3.2.20 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC re: CCCNA report–EF with RPCNA dated March 29, 2016
- 8.3.2.21 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC re: CCCNA not to deal with past issues dated March 29, 2016
- 8.3.2.22 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC re: CCCNA and NAPARC–Report 5 dated March 29, 2016
- 8.3.3 Committee for Church Unity (CCU)
 - 8.3.3.1 The Orangeville CanRC dated January 22, 2016
 - 8.3.3.2 The Fergus-Maranatha CanRC dated March 17, 2016
 - 8.3.3.3 The Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC dated March 5, 2016
 - 8.3.3.4 The Hamilton-Blessings CanRC dated March 19, 2016
 - 8.3.3.5 The Abbotsford CanRC dated March 10, 2016
 - 8.3.3.6 The Lincoln-Vineyard CanRC dated March 22, 2016
- 8.3.4 Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS)
 - 8.3.4.1 The Dunnville CanRC dated January 19, 2016
 - 8.3.4.2 The Fergus-Maranatha CanRC dated March 17, 2016
 - 8.3.4.3 The Lincoln-Vineyard CanRC dated March 22, 2016
 - 8.3.4.4 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC dated March 29, 2016
- 8.3.5 Committee for the Official Website (CWEB)
 - 8.3.5.1 The Winnipeg-Redeemer CanRC dated February 1, 2016
 - 8.3.5.2 The Cloverdale CanRC dated March 21, 2016
 - 8.3.5.3 The Abbotsford CanRC dated March 10, 2016
 - 8.3.5.4 The Lincoln-Vineyard CanRC dated March 22, 2016
- 8.3.6 Committee for the Needy Students Fund (NSF)
 - 8.3.6.1 The Winnipeg-Redeemer CanRC dated February 1, 2016
 - 8.3.6.2 The Abbotsford CanRC dated March 10, 2016
 - 8.3.6.3 The Willoughby Heights CanRC dated March 7, 2016
- 8.3.7 Committee for Bible Translation (CBT)
 - 8.3.7.1 The St. Albert CanRC dated March 14, 2016
 - 8.3.7.2 The Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC dated March 5, 2016
 - 8.3.7.3 The Hamilton-Cornerstone CanRC dated March 29, 2016
- 8.3.8 Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise
 - 8.3.8.1 The Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC dated March 5, 2016
 - 8.3.8.2 The Cloverdale CanRC dated March 21, 2016
 - 8.3.8.3 The Abbotsford CanRC dated March 10, 2016
 - 8.3.8.4 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC dated March 29, 2016
- 8.3.8b SCBP Supplementary report
 - 8.3.8.5 The Tintern-Spring Creek CanRC dated March 15, 2016
 - 8.3.8.6 The Lynden ARC dated March 21, 2016
 - 8.3.8.7 The Winnipeg-Redeemer CanRC dated March 28, 2016
- 8.3.9 Concern Re: GS 2013 art. 30, General Fund
 - 8.3.9.1 The Orangeville CanRC dated March 21, 2016
- 8.3.10 Letters from the Churches re: GS 2013 art. 110, Women voting
 - 8.3.10.1 The Grand Rapids ARC dated March 22, 2016

8.4 Overtures

- 8.4.1 Overture from RSW dated November 5, 2015, re: care of theological students by their home church and examination of theological students by their home classis
- 8.4.2 Overture from the Brampton-Grace CanRC re: CBT Report

8.5 Letters from the churches regarding the overtures

- 8.5.1 Overture from RSW (8.4.1)
 - 8.5.1.1 The Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC dated February 1, 2016
 - 8.5.1.2 The Ancaster CanRC dated March 7, 2016
 - 8.5.1.3 The Fergus-North CanRC dated February 27, 2016
 - 8.5.1.4 The Hamilton-Providence CanRC dated March 9, 2016
 - 8.5.1.5 The Grand Rapids ARC dated March 22, 2016
 - 8.5.1.6 The Abbotsford CanRC dated March 10, 2016
 - 8.5.1.7 The Grassie-Covenant CanRC dated March 24, 2016
 - 8.5.1.8 The Lincoln-Vineyard CanRC dated March 22, 2016

8.6 Appeals

- 8.6.1 Appeals re: GS 2013 art. 110, Women voting
 - 8.6.1.1 The Hamilton-Cornerstone CanRC dated November 1, 2015
 - 8.6.1.2 The Hamilton-Blessings CanRC dated March 19, 2016 – agreement with Hamilton-Cornerstone CanRC appeal
 - 8.6.1.3 The Vernon CanRC dated August 18, 2014
 - 8.6.1.4 The Smithers CanRC dated October 7, 2015
 - 8.6.1.5 The Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC dated August 17, 2015
 - 8.6.1.6 The Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC dated September 14, 2015
 - 8.6.1.7 The Langley CanRC dated May 18, 2015
 - 8.6.1.8 The Ottawa-Jubilee CanRC dated January 29, 2015
 - 8.6.1.9 The Cloverdale CanRC dated May 4, 2015
 - 8.6.1.10 The Guelph-Living Word CanRC dated November 9, 2015
 - 8.6.1.11 The Flamborough CanRC dated November 16, 2015
 - 8.6.1.12 The Aldergrove CanRC dated March 27, 2014
 - 8.6.1.13 The Edmonton-Providence CanRC dated February 13, 2016
 - 8.6.1.14 The Burlington-Fellowship CanRC dated February 15, 2015
 - 8.6.1.15 The St. Albert CanRC dated March 12, 2016
 - 8.6.1.16 The Brampton-Grace CanRC dated March 23, 2016
 - 8.6.1.17 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC dated March 29, 2016
- 8.6.2 Appeals re: GS 2013 art. 101, Wording of the Subscription Form
 - 8.6.2.1 The Dunnville CanRC dated May, 2014
- 8.6.3 Appeals re: GS 2013 art. 125, Wording in Article 59, CO
 - 8.6.3.1 The Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC dated September 14, 2015
- 8.6.4 Appeals re: GS 2013 art. 97, Bible Translation
 - 8.6.4.1 The Burlington-Fellowship CanRC dated February 15, 2015
- 8.6.5 Appeals re: GS 2013 art. 128, Women's Voting as Local Matter
 - 8.6.5.1 The Burlington-Fellowship CanRC dated February 15, 2015
- 8.6.6 Appeals re: GS 2013 art. 173, Hymn Mandate
 - 8.6.6.1 The Burlington-Fellowship CanRC dated February 15, 2015
 - 8.6.6.2 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC dated March 29, 2016

- 8.6.7 Appeals re: Decision of RSE November 11, 2015
 - 8.6.7.1 The Hamilton-Providence CanRC dated March 7, 2016
 - 8.6.7.2 Letter from br. Arnold Sikkema
- 8.6.8 Appeals re: GS 2013 art. 62
 - 8.6.8.1 The Abbotsford Liberated Reformed Church dated February 25, 2016
- 8.6.9 Appeals re: GS 2013 art. 125 rec. 4.5
 - 8.6.9.1 The Hamilton-Blessings CanRC dated March 19, 2016
- 8.6.10 Appeal re: Ancaster Appeal of a decision made by RSE Nov. 2013
 - 8.6.10.1 The Ancaster CanRC, dated February 8, 2016
 - i. Appeal of Ancaster including Summary of Ecclesiastical Process
 - ii. Appendix 1
 - iii. Appendix 2
 - iv. Appendix 3
 - v. Appendix 4
 - vi. Appendix 5
 - vii. Appendix 6
 - viii. Appendix 7
 - ix. Appendix 8
 - x. Appendix 9
 - xi. Appendix 10
 - 8.6.10.2 Letter from br. Jitse M. van der Meer

9. Appointments

- 9.1 Letter from the Rev. Anthon Souman
- 9.2 Letter from CCCNA
- 10. Censure ad Article 34 CO
- 11. Publication of the Acts
- 12. Financial Matters—wages claim (see letter in agenda item 8.1.3)
- 13. Preparation for next General Synod
- 14. Adoption of the Acts
- 15. Approval of the Press Release
- 16. Closing

Article 11 – GGRI-NTT – Letter of Greeting

The chairman read a letter of greeting sent by the Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the Province Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT), expressing gratitude for our relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship and expressing regret at being unable to attend synod in person on account of lack of funds. The full text of the letter can be found in *Appendix 2*. A letter will be sent in response.

Article 12 – RCNZ – Letter of Greeting

The chairman read a letter of greeting sent by the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ), expressing gratitude for our relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship and expressing regret at being unable to attend synod in person on account of illness of the designated delegate. The full text of the letter can be found in *Appendix 3*. A letter will be sent in response.

Article 13 – FRCA – Fraternal Delegate Address

The chairman introduced the Rev. Stephen ‘t Hart and br. Peter Witten, credentialed delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). Br. Witten addressed synod expressing joy over our warm and close relationship. The full text of his address can be found in *Appendix 4*. The Rev. R. Vermeulen responded with appropriate words.

Article 14 – OPC – Fraternal Delegate Address

The chairman introduced br. Mark Bube, credentialed delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Br. Bube addressed synod, describing the history of the OPC over the past three years and its current state. The full text of his address can be found in *Appendix 5*. The Rev. E. Kampen responded with appropriate words.

Article 15 – RCUS – Fraternal Delegate Address

The chairman introduced the Rev. George Horner, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS). The Rev. Horner addressed synod, encouraging faithfulness to God’s Word, and describing the recent history and current state of the RCUS. The full text of his address can be found in *Appendix 6*. The Rev. J. Poppe responded with appropriate words.

Article 16 – FRCA (Free Reformed Churches of Australia)

Advisory Committee 1 presented its report on the FRCA. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 17 – RCNZ (Reformed Churches of New Zealand)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section Reformed Churches in New Zealand (8.2.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 192) decided to mandate the CRCA:
 - [4.2.1] To continue the relationship of EF with the RCNZ under the adopted rules;
 - [4.2.2] To try to get a better understanding of the practical changes entailed by the relationship of EF that was begun in 2007 and to encourage the RCNZ to be consequent in their relationship with the CRCAustralia as they develop and finalize the rules for EF;
 - [4.2.3] To encourage the RCNZ to keep seeking ways to grow closer towards the FRCA;
 - [4.2.4] To invite the RCNZ to become better acquainted with CRTS in Hamilton;
 - [4.2.5] To send a delegation to the next RCNZ synod in 2014, if feasible.
- 2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:
 - 2.2.1 The Rev. Arend Witten attended Synod Bishopdale in 2014 as delegate;
 - 2.2.2 The RCNZ changed their relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCAus) from sister church relationship to the more restricted ecumenical fellowship, a new relationship for which new rules have been established;
 - 2.2.3 The relationship between the RCNZ and the FRCA has become a sister church relationship;



- 2.2.4 The RCNZ deputies for the training of the ministry endeavour to supervise the training for the ministry by visiting the seminaries where their students are studying. Current commitments with other seminaries limits their ability to add another seminary at this time;
- 2.2.5 The RCNZ and Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CGKN) mutually decided to discontinue their sister church relationship due to limited contact;
- 2.2.6 The RCNZ continues to appreciate the cooperation with the CanRC with the work of mission in Papua and New Guinea (PNG).
- 2.3 The CRCA recommends:
 - 2.3.1 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCNZ under the adopted rules;
 - 2.3.2 To express appreciation for ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in PNG;
 - 2.3.3 To send a delegation to the next RCNZ Synod in 2017.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 From the CRCA report it is evident that the RCNZ remain true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3.2 The CanRC also value the bond with the RCNZ.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) under the adopted rules;
- 4.2 To express appreciation for ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua and New Guinea (PNG);
- 4.3 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to send a delegation to the next RCNZ Synod in 2017.

ADOPTED

Article 18 – Closing Devotions and Adjournment

The Rev. J. Poppe read Revelation 1:9-20, spoke some words, asked those present to sing Hymn 46:1,4, and led in prayer.

Synod was adjourned until the morning session.

**Day 2 — Morning Session
Wednesday, May 11, 2016**

Article 19 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Acts 1:1-5, spoke some words, led in prayer and had those present sing Psalm 68:2,7. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with. Newly arrived fraternal delegates and a fraternal observer were welcomed.



Article 20 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 21 – FRCA (Free Reformed Churches of Australia)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section on the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 CRCA addition to report 2016 re: FRCA recommendation 3c (8.2.2)
- 1.3 Letter from the Flamborough CanRC (8.3.1.6)

2. Observations

2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 123) decided:

- [4.1] To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the FRCA under the adopted rules;
- [4.2] To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing support for and interest in the Theological Seminary, including their generous financial support;
- [4.3] To assure the FRCA of our continued attention to the nature and direction of the relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCAus;
- [4.4] To maintain close contact with the various deputyships of the FRCA in matters of relations with sister-churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third party relationships;
- [4.5] To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding CanRC committees (e.g., our SCBP, sub-committee GKv, our committee in charge of reviewing the liturgical forms, Committee on Bible Translations, and perhaps others) in areas of mutual interest where the CRCA's mandate does not apply;
- [4.6] To send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCA in 2015.

2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:

- 2.2.1 Br. O. Bouwman and br. J. Van Laar attended Synod Baldivis 2015.
- 2.2.2 Synod Baldivis decided to accept the request of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to be sister-churches.
- 2.2.3 Synod Baldivis decided to suspend the relationship with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv), while still maintaining contact.
- 2.2.4 Synod Baldivis offered a sister-church relationship to the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC), which has been accepted.
- 2.2.5 The FRCA mandated their deputies to develop an Australian version of the Canadian *Book of Praise* and present it to their next synod.
- 2.2.6 The FRCA continue to support the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS). Deputies have been tasked with investigating the feasibility of establishing a FRCA theological seminary at some point in the future.

2.3 The CRCA recommends that Synod decide:

- 2.3.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the FRCA under the adopted rules;
- 2.3.2 To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing support for and interest in the CRTS, including their financial support.
- 2.3.3 To mandate the CRCA

- 2.3.3.1 To maintain close contact with the various deputyships of the FRCA in matters of relations with sister-churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third party relationships;
- 2.3.3.2 To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding CanRC committees (e.g., our SCBP, subcommittee GKv, our committee in charge of reviewing the liturgical forms, Committee on Bible Translations, and perhaps others) in areas of mutual interest where the CRCA's mandate does not reach;
- 2.3.3.3 To send a delegation to the next FRCA Synod in 2018.
- 2.4 Flamborough suggests to inquire of the FRCA about further contact with the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (PRCA).

3. Considerations

- 3.1. From the CRCA report it is evident that the FRCA remain true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3.2. The CanRC also value the bond with the FRCA.
- 3.3. Synod should indeed express thankfulness for the continued support of the CRTS.
- 3.4 Synod notes the suggestion of Flamborough and passes it on to the CRCA for their consideration.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules;
- 4.2. To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing support for and interest in the Theological Seminary, including their financial support;
- 4.3. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)
 - 4.3.1 To maintain close contact with the various deputyships of the FRCA in matters of relations with sister-churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third party relationships;
 - 4.3.2 To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP), the Subcommittee for Reformed churches in The Netherlands of the CRCA (CRCA-SRN), our committee in charge of reviewing the liturgical forms, Committee on Bible Translations, and perhaps others) in areas of mutual interest where the CRCA's mandate does not reach;
 - 4.3.3 To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2018.

ADOPTED

Article 22 – Appeal of Ancaster re: RSE 2013 Art. 8

Synod went into closed session.

Committee 4 presented a report on the admissibility of the appeal of the Ancaster CanRC (8.6.10.1) and the letter of br. Jitse M. van der Meer (8.6.10.2). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Synod returned to open session.

Synod was adjourned for committee work until the evening session.

**Day 2 — Evening Session
Wednesday, May 11, 2016**

Article 23 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.

Article 24 – CCCNA (Committee for Contact with Churches in North America) – General Advisory Committee 2 presented its report on the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA): General Report. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 25 – OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church)

Advisory Committee 2 presented its report on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 26 – KPCA-K (Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin))

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) – section Korean Presbyterian Church in America (KPCA-K) (8.2.4)
- 1.2 Brief History of the KPCA-K
- 1.3 Report on Visit to the 30th General Assembly of KPCA-K
- 1.4 Report on Meeting with the IRC of the KPCA-K at NAPARC 2014

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 mandated the committee 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.
- 2.2 August 2014, the Rev. Holtvlüwer received a written request directly from a representative of the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K) to attend their upcoming 30th General Assembly in Chicago, IL. He was invited and attended in his dual capacity as chairman of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) as well as a representative of the CanRC. This marked the first time such a formal invitation from this church was received by the CanRC.
- 2.3 A meeting of representatives of their Inter-church Relations Committee (IRC) and our CCCNA was held at NAPARC 2014. This meeting was helpful to become acquainted with each other's respective churches. It was agreed to hold another such meeting at NAPARC 2015, the Lord willing.
- 2.4 The KPCA-K is the daughter church of the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCCK), a church with which the CanRC has Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF). The KPCA has the very same confessional basis as the mother church. This daughter church exists much closer to the CanRC in North America including parts of Canada.

- 2.5 The dominant language of the KPCA-K 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 EF.

3. Consideration

- 3.1 The committee has fulfilled its mandate in this matter.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide

- 4.1 To express gratitude to the Lord for the establishment of contact with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K).
- 4.2 To mandate the CCCNA to continue dialogue with the KPCA-K where feasible, with a view to getting to know the KPCA-K better over time.

ADOPTED

Article 27 – Point of Order: Application CO 32

As there had been some confusion on the floor of synod over the application of CO 32, the chairman indicated delegates could vote as follows.

- Appeals: if a synod member has been involved in the judging of a certain appeal at a minor assembly, he is advised not to vote when an appeal on the same matter is dealt with by synod.
- Committees: if a synod member is a member of the Board of Governors or the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*, their legal context prevents them from voting. Members of other committees (e.g. CRCA, CCCNA, CNSF) are free to vote in matters pertaining to the committee of which they are part.

Article 28 – ERQ (Reformed Church of Quebec)

Advisory Committee 2 presented its report on the ERQ. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 29 – RCUS (Reformed Church in the United States)

Advisory Committee 2 presented its report on the RCUS. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 30 – NAPARC (North American Reformed and Presbyterian Council)

Advisory Committee 2 presented its report on NAPARC. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 31 – General Fund

1. Material

- 1.1 Financial Report for General Fund from January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2015 (8.2.17)
- 1.2 Letter from the Orangeville CanRC regarding GS 2013 Art. 30 (8.3.9.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The Carman-East CanRC was appointed by GS 2013 to administer the General Fund, and to collect funds as required from the churches.
- 2.2 Carman-East appointed two office bearers to audit the books. They found the books to be in good order.
- 2.3 To administer this fund the churches were assessed \$4 per communicant member for 2013; \$4 for 2014; \$3 for 2015.
- 2.4 The balance of the Fund as of January 1, 2013 was \$22095.92; total disbursements amounted to \$96548.66; balance as of January 1, 2016 was \$41614.59.
- 2.5 Orangeville expressed appreciation for the work of Carman-East in administering the General Fund. At the same time it expressed concern that two of Carman-East's own office bearers audited the books. Orangeville proposed, "That the Church of Carman East ask the Church of Carman West do (*sic*) such audit of the record keeping of the books of the General Fund as administered by Carman East." Orangeville expressed the sentiment that it would be good practice that audits of "financial aspects concerning Synod or the Churches as a whole, be done by Churches in close proximity to the administering Church of such funds, and not the same Church auditing its own records."

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Carman-East has fulfilled its mandate regarding the General Fund.
- 3.2 While in no way questioning the integrity of the audit completed by the brothers of Carman-East, Orangeville makes a valid point that it would be practical and proper to ask the neighbouring congregation of Carman-West to audit the books of the General Fund.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To receive with thankfulness the report from the Carman-East CanRC;
- 4.2 To express gratitude to the office-bearers who audited the books and to Br. G. Vandersluis for functioning as treasurer;
- 4.3 To authorize Carman-East to collect funds from the churches as required until the time of the next synod;
- 4.4 To discharge Carman-East for the duties completed during the period of January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2015;
- 4.5 To reappoint Carman-East to administer the General Fund;
- 4.6 To appoint Carman-West to audit the books of the General Fund.

ADOPTED

Article 32 – Archive Church

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Archives for GS 2013 (8.2.19)
- 1.2 Report on the Inspection of Archives for GS 2013 (8.2.10)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC reports:
 - 2.1.1 All material from GS 2013 has been placed in the Archives of general synods and has been catalogued.
 - 2.1.2 There have been no inquiries for information or request for materials from the archives since the last general synod.
 - 2.1.3 Br. J. Chase has completed scanning of all the Synod archive material for the CRTS – all acts, reports, and standing committee material.
- 2.2 The Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC inspected the archives of GS 2013 and reports that they are in good order.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Burlington-Ebenezer has fulfilled its mandate regarding the archives.
- 3.2 Burlington-Rehoboth has fulfilled its mandate regarding inspection of the archives.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express gratitude to the Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC and Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC for their reports;
- 4.2 To express gratitude to br. J. Chase for the work he did in scanning synod archive material;
- 4.3 To reappoint Burlington-Ebenezer as Archive Church for synod archives;
- 4.4 To reappoint Burlington-Rehoboth to inspect synod archives.

ADOPTED

Article 33 – Address Church

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC (8.2.18)

2. Observation

- 2.1 Burlington-Ebenezer reported it received two requests from the publisher of *The Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* to update the statistical information regarding the CanRC. Burlington-Ebenezer responded to each request with information taken from the most recent copy of the *Yearbook of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches*.

3. Consideration

- 3.1 It is clear from the report that Burlington-Ebenezer fulfilled its mandate.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To receive with thankfulness the report from Burlington-Ebenezer;
- 4.2 To reappoint Burlington-Ebenezer as Address Church for the CanRC.

ADOPTED**Article 34 – Days of Prayer****1. Material**

- 1.1 Report from the Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC and Edmonton-Providence CanRC regarding days of prayer (8.2.13)

2. Observation

- 2.1 Burlington-Rehoboth and Edmonton-Providence reported that they were not called upon by the churches to organize a day of prayer.

3. Consideration

- 3.1 The churches appointed have fulfilled their mandate given by GS 2013.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 3.1 To express gratitude to the Burlington-Rehoboth and Edmonton-Providence CanRC for their report;
- 3.2 To reappoint these two churches to implement Article 54 CO as needed.

ADOPTED**Article 35 – Closing Devotions and Adjournment**

Br. J. Roukema spoke some words, read Romans 12:1-8, led in prayer, and asked those to present sing Hymn 47:4,5.

Synod was adjourned until the morning session.

**Day 3 — Morning Session
Thursday, May 12, 2016**

Article 36 – Reopening

The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Acts 1:6-11, spoke some words, led in prayer, and had those present sing Hymn 45:1,2,3. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with. It was mentioned that the Rev. G. Horner, the RCUS fraternal delegate, had returned home. Newly arrived fraternal delegates and a fraternal observer were welcomed.

Article 37 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 38 – Appeal of Hamilton-Providence re: RSE 2015 Art. 7

Synod went into closed session.

Committee 4 presented a report on an appeal from the Hamilton-Providence CanRC (8.6.7.1) and a letter from br. A. Sikkema (8.6.7.2). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Synod returned to open session.

Article 39 – Letter from J. & B. VanPopta

Synod went into closed session.

Committee 5 presented a report on a letter from the Rev. J. and sr. B. VanPopta (8.1.5). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Synod returned to open session.

Synod was adjourned for committee work.

Day 3 — Afternoon Session Thursday, May 12, 2016

Article 40 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.

Article 41 – Point of Order: Application CO 32

A point of order was raised to discuss the executive's instruction on the application of CO 32 (see GS 2016 Art. 27). The executive's instruction was considered worded too strongly. The instruction was retracted. Members were advised to keep the spirit of CO 32 in mind in voting.

Article 42 – Appeal of Hamilton-Providence re: RSE 2015 Art. 7

Synod went into closed session.

Committee 4 presented draft 2 of a report on an appeal from the Hamilton-Providence CanRC (8.6.7.1) and a letter from br. A. Sikkema (8.6.7.2). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Synod returned to open session.

Synod was adjourned for committee work.

Day 3 — Evening Session Thursday, May 12, 2016

Article 43 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.

Article 44 – RPCNA – Fraternal Observer Address

The chairman introduced the Rev. Bruce Backensto, observer at GS 2016 for the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). The Rev. Backensto addressed Synod, passing on greetings and, among other things, expressing understanding for hesitancy in the CanRC with

respect to entering into EF with the RCPNA. The text of his address can be found in *Appendix 7*. The Rev. J. Poppe responded with appropriate words.

Article 45 – FCC (Free Church of Scotland Continuing)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section Free Church Continuing (FCC) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Abbotsford (8.3.1.1.13), Flamborough (8.3.1.1.6), Smithville (8.3.1.3)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 162) decided:
 - [4.1] To continue the relationship of EF with the FCC under the adopted rules;
 - [4.2] To mandate the CRCA:
 - [4.2.1] To be available to assist the FCC and FCS in any efforts at reconciliation and reunion, should that be requested;
 - [4.2.2] To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the ICRC, mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches) and to leave it in the freedom of the CRCA to send delegates to their assemblies.
 - [4.2.3] To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC congregations in North America.
- 2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:
 - 2.2.1 Communication was maintained with the FCC via electronic mail;
 - 2.2.2 There are a number of congregations in the USA and the church at Ottawa has contact with a very small FCC church in Smith Falls, ON;
 - 2.2.3 The CRCA reports that as far as it can judge, the FCC is a church federation which is faithful to the Word of God.
- 2.3 The committee recommends:
 - 2.3.1 To continue the relationship of EF with the FCC under the adopted rules;
 - 2.3.2 To mandate the CRCA:
 - 2.5.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the ICRC, mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches) and to leave it in the freedom of the CRCA to send delegates to their assemblies;
 - 2.5.2.2 To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC congregations in North America.
- 2.4 Reactions from the churches:
 - 2.4.1 Abbotsford wonders if the church relationship with the FCC and Free Church of Scotland (FCS) can be meaningful if you do not visit within a three-year period;
 - 2.4.2 Smithville requests to include a review of the annual reports of the Scottish Synods in the committee mandate.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 From the CRCA report it is evident that as far as they can judge, the FCC are faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 3.2 EF should include review of the proceedings of the FCC General Assemblies and, if possible, visits. It is regrettable that the report to this Synod does not give evidence that the proceedings were reviewed.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) under the adopted rules;
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
- 4.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches) and to send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;
- 4.2.2 To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC congregations in North America.

ADOPTED

Article 46 – FCS (Free Church of Scotland)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section Free Church of Scotland (FCS) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Abbotsford (8.3.1.1.13), Flamborough (8.3.1.6), Smithville (8.3.1.3)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 161) decided:
- [4.1] To continue the relationship of EF with the FCS under the adopted rules;
- [4.2] To mandate the CRCA:
- [4.2.1] To be available to assist the FCS and FCC in any efforts at reconciliation and reunion, should that be requested;
- [4.2.2] To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the ICRC, mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches) and to leave it in the freedom of the CRCA to send delegates to their assemblies;
- [4.2.3] To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCS congregations in North America.
- 2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:
- 2.2.1 Communication was maintained with the FCS with electronic mail.
- 2.2.2 There is a congregation of the FCS in Livonia, Detroit, Michigan and there are six congregations in Prince Edward Island.
- 2.2.3 The CRCA reports that as far as it can judge, the FCS is a church federation which is faithful to the Word of God.
- 2.3 The committee recommends:
- 2.3.1 To continue the relationship of EF with the FCS under the adopted rules;
- 2.3.2 To mandate the CRCA:



- 2.3.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the ICRC, mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches) and to leave it in the freedom of the CRCA to send delegates to their assemblies.
- 2.3.2.2 To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCS congregations in North America.

2.4 Reactions from the churches:

- 2.4.1 Abbotsford wonders if the church relationship with the FCC and FCS can be meaningful if you do not visit within a three-year period;
- 2.4.2 Smithville requests to include a review of the annual reports of the Scottish Synods in the committee mandate.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 From the CRCA report it is evident that as far as they can judge, the FCS are faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3.2 EF should include review of the proceedings of the FCS General Assemblies, and, if possible, visits. It is regrettable that the report to this Synod does not give evidence that the proceedings were reviewed.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) under the adopted rules;
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches) and to send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years.
 - 4.2.2 To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCS congregations in North America.

ADOPTED

Article 47 – FRCSA (Free Reformed Churches of South Africa)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the Flamborough CanRC (8.3.1.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 132) decided:
 - [4.1] To continue the relationship of EF with the FRCSA under the adopted rules;
 - [4.2] To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of continued financial assistance, to help them support the needy churches in the federation and to assist them with their extensive mission work and relief efforts among the disadvantaged and sick in South Africa;
 - [4.3] To mandate the Board of Governors of our Theological College to investigate together with the FRCSA if there are possibilities to set up a form of long distance

learning for the first year of theological training, with the use of facilitators in South Africa;

[4.4] To send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA if possible.

2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:

2.2.1 Synod-FRCSA 2014 decided to send a letter to the Synod of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) to encourage them to remain faithful to the reformed teaching;

2.2.2 The same synod decided not to establish sister church relationship with the DGK (The Reformed Churches [in The Netherlands]);

2.2.3 The synod also decided to establish clear admission guidelines for new theological students;

2.2.4 Even though the FRCSA mission church plants require significant support, the FRCSA has asked the CanRC to scale back the contributions in an effort to become more independently sustainable;

2.2.5 The FRCSA propose that the debate on reformed hermeneutics be continued between themselves and the CanRC with a view to coming to a clear mutual statement.

2.3 The committee recommends:

2.3.1 To continue the relationship of EF with the FRCSA;

2.3.2 To mandate the CRCA to send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA if possible.

2.4 Flamborough suggests to specify that the delegation be one person only.

3. Considerations

3.1 It is evident that the FRCSA continue to be a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ in accordance with the rules for EF.

3.2 The establishing of guidelines for admission of new theological students is evidence of the FRCSA's attention to the training for the ministry.

3.3 We are thankful that under the new admission requirements FRCSA students will be expected to attend the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS).

3.4 With thankfulness it is noted that the FRCSA mission church plants are trying to become more independently sustainable, and therefore the CanRC contribution can be scaled back.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

4.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA);

4.2 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;

4.3 To encourage the CRTS to support the FRCSA in the training of their theological students, because of the unique circumstances of the FRCSA theological training program.

ADOPTED

Article 48 – FCC – Letter of Greeting

The chairman read a letter of greeting sent via email by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC), expressing gratitude for our relationship of EF. Regret was expressed at being unable to attend synod in person. The full text of the letter can be found in *Appendix 8*. A letter will be sent in response.

Article 49 – CCCNA (Committee for Contact with Churches in North America) – General**1. Material**

- 1.1 The Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) – General (8.2.4)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Carman-West (8.3.2.2), Cloverdale (8.3.2.3), Fergus-North (8.3.2.6), Smithville (8.3.2.7), Fergus-Maranatha (8.3.2.9), Hamilton-Blessings (8.3.2.11), Lynden (8.3.2.15), Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.2.19), Toronto-Bethel (8.3.2.21)
- 1.3 Letter from CCCNA, February 10, 2016 re: appointment of committee members (8.2.4.1)
- 1.4 Letter from CCCNA, May 2, 2016 re: appointment of committee members (9.2)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 55) decided to mandate the CCCNA:
 - [4.1.1] To continue contact with all those churches in the Americas with which we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship (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 relationship;
 - [4.1.2] To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in the Americas;
 - [4.1.3] To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in the Americas;
 - [4.1.4] 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 General Synod.
- 2.2 The CCCNA maintained its Subcommittees East and West. Subcommittee West was responsible for contacts with the RCUS, RPCNA and NAPARC. Subcommittee East was responsible for contacts with the ERQ and OPC. At least two members of each subcommittee attended NAPARC in 2013, 2014 and 2015.
- 2.3 The CCCNA asks that the Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer, Rev. E. Kampen, and br. C. Poppe be discharged from the committee and thanked for their years of service to the churches as members of the CCCNA.
- 2.4 The CCCNA asks that it not be required to pursue outstanding matters of difference with particular churches with whom we have already established Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF). The committee asks that, if Synod asks the CCCNA to pursue outstanding matters of difference, the purpose and goal of having such discussions should be clearly spelled out in the mandate.
- 2.5 The CCCNA recommends that the mandate, as stated by GS 2010, be renewed, for the CCCNA until 2019.

- 2.6 Carman-West, Hamilton-Blessings, and Toronto-Bethel concur with the concern of the CCCNA that ongoing discussion of outstanding matters threatens progress in the EF relationships we have or desire to build.
- 2.7 Cloverdale suggests that the questions used by the OPC in their ecclesiastical contacts also be considered for use by our committee in their contact with churches with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship.
- 2.8 Cloverdale cautions the committee about the manner of its reporting. The mandate of the committee is given by Synod and not by ‘a small number of churches’ (3.1 of the CCCNA Report).
- 2.9 Fergus-North, Fergus-Maranatha, and Smithville disagree with the request of the CCCNA to remove specific questions of outstanding differences from the mandate of the committee in regard to churches with whom we have EF. These issues of difference need to be explored further.
- 2.10 Lynden expresses concern about the amount of time and resources spent on the fulfilment of the mandate of this committee. Lynden urges Synod to be sober about the requirement for and benefits of committing time and effort to the maintenance of current relationships and the exploring of new relationships.
- 2.11 Lynden alleges that the rules of EF have not been applied consistently in our relationships with other churches. If we stop discussing outstanding differences with other churches, when those differences are not resolved, we are acting inconsistently.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCCNA carried out its mandate diligently.
- 3.2 Rule 1 of EF states that “the churches shall assist each other in the maintenance, defense and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy, and be watchful for deviations.” Within this context there is always room for brotherly discussion about differences in matters of doctrine and practice.
- 3.3 When we enter into EF we accept each other as faithful churches without qualifications. Differences that were noted and discussed prior to EF, but which did not hinder entering into EF, do not require resolution. It is incorrect to speak of “outstanding differences.” The word “outstanding” implies a need for resolution. Bringing up these issues repeatedly, without proper proof of necessity, is potentially damaging to sister-church relationships. Discussion of these issues may take place naturally in the course of EF, but a specific mandate, identifying particular issues, need not be given.
- 3.4 If a synod asks the CCCNA to pursue specific matters of difference, the purpose and goal of having such discussions should be clearly spelled out in the mandate.
- 3.5 The questions used by the OPC in their relationships with other churches capture the spirit of humility and service that ought to characterize relationships between churches.
- 3.6 Lynden has raised a concern about the proper use of resources. However, Lynden did not make a specific proposal. The CCCNA was able to do meaningful work on behalf of the churches while spending the churches’ resources wisely.
- 3.7 Cloverdale’s concern about the manner of reporting is valid. The mandate of the committee is given by a synod, not by a small number of churches.

4 Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):
 - 4.1.1 To continue contact with all those churches in North America with which we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship (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;
 - 4.1.2 To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in North America;
 - 4.1.3 To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in North America;
 - 4.1.4 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.
- 4.2 To discharge the Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer, the Rev. E. Kampen, and br. C. Poppe from the CCCNA and to thank them for their years of service to the churches as members of this committee.
- 4.3 To recommend the questions of the Committee for Ecumenicity and Inter-church Relations (CEIR) of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) for the consideration and usage of the committee at its discretion.

ADOPTED

Article 50 -- Closing Devotions and Adjournment

Br. L. Jagt read 2 Corinthians 4:1-18 and spoke some words. He asked those present to sing Hymn 83:1,2 and led in prayer.

Synod was adjourned for committee work.

Day 4 — Morning Session Friday, May 13, 2016

Article 51 – Reopening

The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Acts 1:12-26, spoke some words, led in prayer, and asked those present to sing Hymn 52:1,2,5. It was mentioned that the Rev. B. Backensto, the RPCNA fraternal observer, had returned home and that br. M. Bube, the OPC fraternal delegate, would be returning home. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with. Newly arrived fraternal delegates were welcomed.

Article 52 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 53 – Appeal of LRCA re: GS 2013 Art. 62**1. Material**

- 1.1 Letter from the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA) (8.6.8.1)

2. Admissibility

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 62) declared their letter inadmissible. GS 2013 observed, “The churches of the Canadian Reformed federation set the agenda for general synod. No church has asked us to address this issue. Synod also accepts correspondence received from churches with which we are in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The letter from the LRCA does not fulfil either criterion.” GS 2016 agrees with GS 2013’s observation.

3. Recommendation

That Synod declare the letter inadmissible.

ADOPTED**Article 54 – Appeal of Dunnville re: GS 2013 Art. 101 Rec. 4.1****1. Material**

- 1.1 Appeal from the Dunnville CanRC (8.6.2.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The SCBP submitted two corrections for the forms of subscription in the Authorized Provisional Version of the *Book of Praise*. These corrections were submitted because, due to an editing oversight, these forms did not reflect the approved versions adopted by GS 2010.
- 2.2 The Abbotsford CanRC stated that it could not agree with the corrections submitted by the SCBP, and advised that both forms be amended as follows: “We will first submit this to the church via her assemblies for judgment.”
- 2.3 GS 2013 adopted the wording proposed by Abbotsford (GS 2013 Art. 101 Rec. 4.1.1).
- 2.4 Dunnville considers that GS 2013 had stated that Abbotsford’s disagreement was with GS 2010, and not with the action of the SCBP.
- 2.5 Dunnville further considers that as a result of the decision to adopt the wording proposed by Abbotsford, the CanRC now have novel terminology in the subscription forms that was not first examined by the churches.
- 2.6 Dunnville further considers that the terminology adopted by GS 2013 is problematic, because it confuses the federation of churches with the local church. The assemblies referred to are not assemblies of the local church, but of the federation of churches. On a point of principle, the federation is called the Canadian Reformed Churches, not the Canadian Reformed Church.
- 2.7 Dunnville further considers that GS 2013 should simply have noted that what the SCBP submitted was a correction of its own mistake. The wording adopted by GS 2010 would thus still stand.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Abbotsford’s disagreement was with GS 2010, and not with the SCBP.

- 3.2 The CanRC now have wording in the subscription forms that is novel, and had not been examined by the churches prior to its adoption, because it came to GS 2013 by way of a letter from Abbotsford.
- 3.3 GS 2013 should simply have noted that the SCBP was correcting its own mistake.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide

- 4.1 That GS 2013 erred when it changed the wording of the subscription forms from what had been adopted by GS 2010;
- 4.2 That the correction presented to GS 2013 by the SCBP reflects what GS 2010 had decided to be the correct formulation of the forms of subscription;
- 4.3 That the wording of the subscription forms as decided by GS 2010 be reinstated at the next printing of the *Book of Praise*.

ADOPTED

Article 55 – Letter from J. & B. VanPopta

Synod went into closed session.

1 Material

- 1.1 Letter from the Rev. J. and sr. B. VanPopta (8.1.5)

2. Observation regarding admissibility

- 2.1 Br. and sr. VanPopta request that an act of a closed session of a previous synod be published in amended form in the *Acts* of this synod.

3. Consideration

- 3.1 A synod is an assembly of the churches and does not deal with proposals from individuals, but only from churches (CO 30).

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To declare the letter inadmissible.

ADOPTED

Synod returned to open session.

Synod was adjourned for committee work.

Day 4 — Evening Session Friday, May 13, 2016

Article 56 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.

Article 57 – FRCSA – Fraternal Delegate Address

The chairman introduced the Rev. Dirk Boersma, credentialed fraternal delegate of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA). The Rev. Boersma addressed Synod, passing on greetings and, among others, explained the desperate need for Afrikaans speaking ministers, as they are as rare as “chickens’ teeth.” The full text of his address can be found in *Appendix 9*. The Rev. D. Wynia responded with appropriate words.

Article 58 – GKv – Fraternal Delegate Address

The chairman introduced the Rev. J.M. (Kim) Batteau and br. Peter Bakker, fraternal delegates of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv). The Rev. Batteau addressed Synod, passing on greetings. He described the situation of the GKv and where they are at with respect to various matters. He pleaded with the CanRC to continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) relationship. The full text of his address can be found in *Appendix 10*. The Rev. R.C. Janssen responded with appropriate words.

Article 59 – ERQ (Reformed Church of Quebec)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) – section on the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) (8.2.4)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Fergus-North (8.3.2.6), Fergus-Maranatha (8.3.2.9), Hamilton-Blessings (8.3.2.11), Grassie-Covenant (8.3.2.14), and Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.2.19)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 21) gave the CCCNA the following mandate with respect to the ERQ:
 - [4.3] 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.
- 2.2 The CCCNA fulfilled its mandate by meeting with delegates of the Inter-Church Relations Committee (IRC) of the ERQ and by attending synods of the ERQ.
- 2.3 The CCCNA had fruitful discussions with the ERQ delegates about matters of doctrine and practice, including women deacons, supervision of the pulpit, modus operandi of the synod of the CanRC, and interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 in the CanRC. The CCCNA asks not to be mandated regarding specific matters of difference with the ERQ.
- 2.4 The CCCNA reports that the ERQ requested clarification of their privileges in the relationship of EF. The delegates confirmed that the ERQ has the full privileges of a ‘sister’ church.
- 2.5 The matter of women deacons remains a matter of ongoing discussion with the ERQ.
- 2.6 The CCCNA affirmed to the ERQ that the CanRC has not adopted any statements regarding the doctrine of creation.
- 2.7 Fergus-North asks that the committee be mandated to continue the discussion with the ERQ on the place and function of women deacons in the ERQ and to continue the discussion regarding the doctrine of creation.

- 2.8 Fergus-Maranatha asks that the committee be mandated to continue the discussion with the ERQ on unresolved matters, including the ordination of women deacons, supervision of the pulpit and admission to the Lord's table.
- 2.9 Grassie-Covenant asks that the committee be mandated to continue the discussion with the ERQ on the matter of women deacons.
- 2.10 Lincoln-Vineyard supports that special care be taken to treat the ERQ as a sister church, not a daughter church.
- 2.11 Hamilton-Blessings supports that the CCCNA not be specifically mandated to address the ERQ regarding identified matters of difference in doctrine and practice.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCCNA fulfilled its mandate regarding the ERQ.
- 3.2 God has blessed the ERQ as a small and fragile group of churches in a spiritually hostile environment.
- 3.3 Rule 1 of EF states that “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.” Within this context there is always room for discussion about differences in matters of doctrine and practice.
- 3.4 When we enter EF we accept each other as faithful churches without qualifications. Differences that were noted and discussed prior to EF, but which did not hinder entering EF, do not require resolution. It is incorrect to speak of “outstanding differences.” The word “outstanding” implies a need for resolution. Bringing up these issues repeatedly, without proper proof of necessity, is potentially damaging to sister-church relationships. Discussion of these issues may take place naturally in the course of EF, but a specific mandate, identifying particular issues, need not be given.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the Lord for the faithful Reformed witness provided in and by the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ);
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the ERQ under the adopted rules;
- 4.3 To involve the fraternal delegates in discussions at synods in such a way as to honour the sister-to-sister-church relationship;
- 4.4 To encourage the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects.

ADOPTED

Article 60 – RCUS (Reformed Church in the United States)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) – section Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) (8.2.4)
- 1.2 Letter from the Hamilton-Blessings CanRC (8.3.2.11)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 93) gave the CCCNA the following mandate with respect to the RCUS:
[4.2.2] To mandate the CCCNA to continue the relationship of EF with the RCUS under the Adopted rule and to endeavour to meet regularly to discuss matters of mutual concern and edification, giving attention to matters of Lord's Day observance and admissions to the Lord's table.
- 2.2 Since GS 2013 the CCCNA met annually with the Inter-church Relations Committee (IRC) of the RCUS. These meetings took place in conjunction with the annual meetings of NAPARC. Matters discussed included the following:
- 2.2.1 Due to decline of membership, the American Reformed congregation of Blue Bell dissolved. Some of the former members have since joined a local RCUS congregation.
- 2.2.2 In light of their contact with some of the members of the former Blue Bell church, the RCUS requested a discussion with the CCCNA about the place of children in the covenant. The conclusion was that our respective federations have the same views about this matter of doctrine.
- 2.2.3 Rev. S. Powell of the RCUS spoke at a conference hosted by the Winnipeg-Redeemer CanRC on the topic "Promoting a Biblical Sexual Morality." He also led worship services in the Redeemer church.
- 2.2.4 An article from the *Reformed Herald* magazine was reprinted in *Clarion*;
- 2.2.5 The RCUS expressed appreciation for the decision of GS 2013 not to allow voting by women in the churches.
- 2.2.6 The CCCNA discussed with the RCUS delegates their mutual concerns about the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv).
- 2.2.7 In view of GS 2013's decision not to offer EF to the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) on the ground that these churches allow for female deacons, the RCUS was asked how they view the issue of female deacons in connection to their ongoing relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the RPCNA. The RCUS delegates mentioned that their churches have but little contact with the RPCNA at this time. They also stated that their churches have an increased awareness of the responsibilities entailed in a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship. In regard to establishing relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship, the matter of female deacons would likely receive greater scrutiny in the present than it did in the past.
- 2.2.8 The CCCNA raised with the RCUS delegates the mandate given by GS 2013. The IRC of the RCUS expressed regret that issues discussed in the past come up for discussion again. They feel that differences between our respective churches should be accepted with the recognition of each other as faithful churches of the Lord.
- 2.2.9 The RCUS asked about the CanRC position on the length of the six days of creation. The CCCNA responded by referring to confessional statements. It was acknowledged that some in the CanRC are looking for room within the confessions for views other than a literal, six-day sequence of creation.
- 2.2.10 The RCUS informed the CCCNA of a new sister-church relationship it had established with the United Covenant Reformed Church in the Philippines. It also informed the CCCNA that it had received some initial contact from the Heritage

Reformed Congregations. Additionally, the RCUS has established ecclesiastical relations with the Reformed Fellowship Church in Kenya.

- 2.3 The CCCNA sent representation to the general synods of 2014 and 2015 of the RCUS. The CCCNA also received a copy of the Abstracts of these synods which are also available on the RCUS website. The CCCNA feels that visiting the assemblies of the RCUS has served to cement the relationship with these churches.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCCNA has fulfilled its mandate in regard to the RCUS.
- 3.2 Rule 1 of EF states that “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.” Within this context, there is always room for discussion about differences in matters of doctrine and practice.
- 3.3 When we enter EF, we accept each other as faithful churches without qualification. Differences that were noted and discussed prior to EF but which did not hinder entering EF, do not require resolution. It is incorrect to speak of “outstanding differences.” The word “outstanding” implies a need for resolution. Bringing up these issues repeatedly, without proper proof of necessity, is potentially damaging to the sister-church relationship. Discussion of these issues may take place naturally in the course of EF, but a specific mandate, identifying particular issues, need not be given.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the Lord for the faithfulness of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) to the Word of God and the Reformed confessions;
- 4.2 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the RCUS under the adopted rules.

ADOPTED

Article 61 – OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) – section Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) (8.2.4)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Fergus-Maranatha (8.3.2.9), Hamilton-Blessings (8.3.2.11), Lynden (8.3.2.15)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 43) gave the CCCNA the following mandate with respect to the OPC:
[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.
- 2.2 The CCCNA continued the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) by correspondence, annual meetings with the Committee for Ecumenicity and Inter-church Relations (CEIR), and bi-annual attendance of the General Assembly, including participation in a colloquium about how to fulfill our tasks as churches, particularly in



bringing the gospel to the world. One of the significant questions that the OPC asks churches in EF is: Are there specific occasions where you believe we have failed to live up to our commitments to you or have caused you grief? The CCCNA conveyed to the CEIR that the OPC has not caused any grief, but rather great joy in the fellowship we enjoy with each other.

- 2.3 The CCCNA received assurance from the CEIR that the 2001 agreement is functioning well. The CEIR also expressed surprise and disappointment that the agreement was part of the mandate of GS 2013. The CCCNA made very clear that no particular offense occasioned this mandate, but that it arises from the concerns raised by individual churches within the CanRC. The CCCNA and the CEIR share the desire to be mandated to work together on new items rather than revisiting the issues of the past. (See also the CCCNA report, General matters).
- 2.4 The CEIR reported on developing relations with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB), a church comprising about a million members. Some of the theological students of the IPB are studying at Greenville Theological Seminary which also trains many in the OPC. The OPC fraternal delegate also reported that OPC missionaries and IPB missionaries rub shoulders in the work in Uruguay. The IPB approached them after the IPB had broken off contact with the PCUSA. The IPB sees “her mother’s eyes” in the OPC and thus sought fellowship with it. They have invited the OPC into a relationship of EF. In its consideration of this invitation, the CEIR expressed the concerns around the fact that one of the IPB’s presbyteries asked if it was permissible for women to preach under the oversight of session, even though the IPB, in principle, is against the ordination of women to the offices. The delegate attending synod reported that the concern was satisfactorily addressed, and the OPC entered into EF with the IPB in 2015.
- 2.5 The CEIR also reported that the General Assembly appointed a study committee on the issues of the republication of the covenant of works given how one of the Presbyteries faced significant struggles on this issue. According to the *Acts* of GA 2014, this committee was mandated to study “whether and in which particular senses the concept of the Mosaic Covenant as a republication of the Adamic Covenant is consistent with the doctrinal system taught in [our] confessional standards.” According to the CCCNA this view is somehow tied to the two kingdom viewpoint. Within that presbytery a deep rift and conflict on this had developed and became quite personal. The General Assembly also established a visitation committee to be available should the Presbytery request help.
- 2.6 The CCCNA asked the CEIR for clarification on the OPC entering into EF with the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK). The IRCK is a consciously confessional church, and the 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.
- 2.7 The CCCNA passed on the interim copy of the report sent to GS 2016 regarding the GKv.
- 2.8 The CCCNA highlights to synod the helpful questions the CEIR uses for its discussions with other inter-church relations committees.
- 2.9 Fergus-Maranatha asks synod not to drop the two specific issues of confessional membership and admission to the Lord’s Supper, but instead to mandate the CCCNA:

- 2.9.1 To clearly illustrate why we continue to have confessional membership, and thus how confessional membership would benefit the OPC;
- 2.9.2 To demonstrate to GS 2019 how the CanRC and the OPC have moved ahead on these two issues so that it no longer is a matter of concern for the churches.
- 2.10 Fergus-Maranatha also urges synod to encourage the OPC, in its dialogue with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil, to advise them that it is not permissible for women to preach.
- 2.11 Lynden asks if the CanRC, in retrospect, have been straight with the OPC regarding our ongoing concerns of the fencing of the Lord's supper table and confessional membership. Neither the OPC nor the CanRC have officially changed their positions. This begs the question: are we consistent, transparent, and forthright with the brothers in the OPC when we promised to continue the discussions on the existing differences in confession and church polity?
- 2.12 The OPC fraternal delegate remarked that it would be good for the federations to work more together on foreign mission projects since to have teams of workers where the workers come from different federations is very helpful in overcoming the growth of "dependence mindsets" on the mission fields.

3 Considerations

- 3.1 The CCCNA fulfilled its mandate regarding the OPC.
- 3.2 Re: Observation 2.10. The OPC has already made its concerns very clear in its address to the IPB General Assembly, and the matters were satisfactorily resolved in a subsequently adjourned assembly, thus allowing the OPC to proceed with EF.
- 3.3 Re: Observation 2.12. The CanRC should keep this point in mind as they ponder their mission tasks.
- 3.4 Rule 1 of EF states that "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." Within this context there is always room for brotherly discussion about differences in matters of doctrine and practice.
- 3.5 When we enter EF we accept each other as faithful churches without qualifications. Differences that were noted and discussed prior to EF, but which did not hinder entering EF, do not require resolution. It is incorrect to speak of "outstanding differences." The word "outstanding" implies a need for resolution. Bringing up these issues repeatedly, without proper proof of necessity, is potentially damaging to sister-church relationships. Discussion of these issues may take place naturally in the course of EF, but a specific mandate, identifying particular issues, need not be given.

4 Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the LORD for the way in which the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) actively provides a faithful Reformed witness to the gospel;
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the OPC under the adopted rules.

ADOPTED

**Article 62 – RCPNA (Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America)**

Advisory Committee 2 presented its report on the RPCNA. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 63 – NAPARC (North American Reformed and Presbyterian Council)

Advisory Committee 2 presented a second report on NAPARC. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 64 – CPTPF (Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report from the Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CPTPF) (8.2.12)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 73) decided:

[4.2] To reappoint the Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church at Guelph as the PTP funding committee with the following mandate:

[4.2.1] To look after the internship-related funding matters;

[4.2.2] To assess the churches each year based on the anticipated funding required for a particular summer;

[4.2.3] To report about its activities to the next general synod, which report shall be sent to all the churches at least six months prior to the next general synod.

- 2.2 The CPTPF has updated its documents entitled *The Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding* and *Guidelines Developed by the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee* “to reflect a change in the name to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and to record the increased amounts paid to churches employing students.”

- 2.3 The Committee reports which students were funded by the program in the summers of 2013, 2014, and 2015.

- 2.4 The Committee reports that in 2013, 2014, and 2015 its books were audited and its records were found to be in good order.

3. Consideration

- 3.1 The Committee has done its work with dedication and aplomb and the funding program has worked well.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express gratitude to the Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC and its committee for the work it has done;

- 4.2 To reappoint Guelph-Emmanuel as the Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CPTPF) with the following mandate:

4.2.1 To look after all internship-related funding matters;

4.2.2 To assess the churches each year based on the anticipated funding required for a particular summer;

4.2.3 To report about its activities to the next general synod, which report shall be sent to all the churches at least six months prior to the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 65 - Closing Devotions and Adjournment

The Rev. R. Vermeulen spoke some words, read Jeremiah 31:1-14, led in prayer, and asked those present to sing Psalm 138:1.

Synod was adjourned to reconvene Monday morning.

**Day 5 — Morning Session
Monday, May 16, 2016**

Article 66 – Reopening

The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Acts 2:1-13, spoke some words, led in prayer, and had those present sing Hymn 50:1,2,3,4.

Article 67 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 68 – Committee for the Official Website (CWeb)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report from the Committee for the Official Website (CWeb) (8.2.15)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Winnipeg-Redeemer (8.3.5.1), Cloverdale (8.3.5.2), Abbotsford (8.3.5.3), Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.5.4)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 92) gave the CWeb the following mandate:
 - [4.3.1] To maintain the existing website and associated technical functions;
 - [4.3.2] To revise the content of the website whenever necessary, in particular ensuring that the text of the *Book of Praise* is the same as that most recently adopted and revised by general synod;
 - [4.3.3] To make synod reports available on the web before the next synod;
 - [4.3.4] To provide web services and email services to the churches and to serve the churches with advice with regard to setting up their own websites;
 - [4.3.5] To make all the Acts of all past general synods, as well as all committee reports to these synods, available on the website in searchable format;
 - [4.3.6] To investigate the effectiveness of the website and to come with a proposal for improvement and include that in the report to the next general synod;
 - [4.3.7] To serve Synod 2016 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of synod, including a financial statement and a proposed budget and any recommendations regarding new content to be added to the website.
- 2.2 The term of br. Jeremy Koopmans is now completed and the Rev. Wes Bredenhof stepped down from his role after accepting a call to the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Australia. The CWeb has forwarded to synod a list of nominees for consideration for appointment to this committee.
- 2.3 In regard to its activities, the CWeb reports the following:
 - 2.3.1 Nothing has changed in the technical set-up over the last three years;



- 2.3.2 Little new content has been added to the website beyond the regular flow of news items, press releases and updates regarding local churches or ministers;
- 2.3.3 Due to copyright restrictions, the CWeb is no longer able to host links to the Psalms and Hymns of the *Book of Praise*;
- 2.3.4 The CWeb continues to provide website hosting and domain name services for churches of the federation which wish to use this service;
- 2.3.5 The CWeb has digitalized all past *Acts* of general synods. The work of collecting and digitalizing past synodical reports is not yet complete;
- 2.3.6 The CWeb has not completed the mandate it received from GS 2013 to investigate the effectiveness of the website and to make proposals to the Synod for improvement;
- 2.3.7 Between 2013 and 2015, there was a slight increase in website traffic.
- 2.4 The CWeb recommends that GS 2016 give the following mandate to the CWeb:
 - 2.4.1 To maintain the existing website and associated technical functions;
 - 2.4.2 To revise the content of the website whenever necessary, in particular ensuring that the text of the *Book of Praise* is the same as that most recently adopted and revised by General Synod;
 - 2.4.3 To make reports to synod available on the web before the next synod;
 - 2.4.4 To provide web services and email services to the churches and serve the churches with advice with regard to the possibilities of setting up their own websites;
 - 2.4.5 To make all committee reports to past synods available on the website in searchable format;
 - 2.4.6 To investigate the effectiveness of the website, prepare a proposal for improvement, and include that in the report to the next general synod;
 - 2.4.7 To serve GS 2019 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod, including a financial statement and a proposed budget, and any recommendations regarding new content to be added to the website.
- 2.5 The CWeb asks Synod to approve a budget of \$4,200 for the period 2016-2018. This includes a significant amount for document scanning.
- 2.6 The CWeb asks Synod to appoint two new members to the committee with six year terms.
- 2.7 In an Appendix, the CWeb indicates that it spent \$1,688.08 of its \$5,000 budget for the period from 2013-2015.
- 2.8 Winnipeg-Redeemer recommends that the mandate of the CWeb should include seeking permission for publishing links to copyrighted hymns in the *Book of Praise*, or else the mandate should read: “revised the non-copyrighted content.”
- 2.9 Winnipeg-Redeemer also recommends that the CWeb be mandated to refresh the website’s design and layout to provide a better visitor experience and to bring the site’s technology and platform to present-day standards. In particular, Winnipeg-Redeemer seeks to make the website suitable for those who access it via their mobile phone or other smart devices.
- 2.10 Abbotsford recommends that the website be made “mobile friendly” and also seeks the use of more graphics and generally a more “user friendly” website.
- 2.11 Cloverdale also recommends making the website more usable for mobile phone users since the current menu structure does not work well for touch screens. Cloverdale also states that it would be helpful if the menu items for areas of the website such as the

Church Order and the Belgic Confession were also able to be viewed in one page or in the context of their own section.

- 2.12 Lincoln-Vineyard recommends improving the document searching and information organization of the website. It also recommends changing the website to be more suitable for smart phones and similar devices. Lastly, it recommends a visual “face-lift” for the web site.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CWeb has largely fulfilled the mandate given to it by GS 2013. Outstanding matters include the work of digitizing past synodical reports, evaluating the effectiveness of the website, and making proposals for improvement to Synod. The CWeb therefore recommends that these matters be included in the mandate to be given to it by GS 2016.
- 3.2 The suggestions brought to GS 2016 by several churches have merit and should be included in the mandate of the CWeb.
- 3.3 Instead of only proposing changes to GS 2019, it would be more effective for the CWeb to be granted authority to make necessary changes over the next years in order to improve the website. This will necessitate an increase in the committee’s budget.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the Committee for the Official Website (CWeb) for the work it has done from 2013-2016;
- 4.2 To give the CWeb a budget of \$10,000 for the period 2016-2019;
- 4.3 To appoint two new members to the CWeb and to thank br. Jeremy Koopmans and the Rev. Dr. W. Bredenhof for the work which they did for this committee;
- 4.3 To mandate the committee:
 - 4.3.1 To maintain the existing website and associated technical functions;
 - 4.3.2 To revise the content of the website whenever necessary;
 - 4.3.3 To continue the project of digitalizing Reports brought to past synods and to ensure that all reports for GS 2019 are available on the website before the next general synod;
 - 4.3.4 To investigate the effectiveness of the website and to implement changes as considered necessary and desirable, focusing on the following matters: design and layout of the website, greater usability for smart phones and similar devices, menu structures, searching capabilities and greater use of graphics. The CWeb should also investigate whether or not it is possible to get permission for publishing links to the Psalms and Hymns of the *Book of Praise* on the website;
 - 4.3.5 To use paid, professional services, if necessary, to complete 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 in a timely fashion;
 - 4.3.6 To serve GS 2019 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months before the beginning of Synod, including a financial statement and a proposed budget.

ADOPTED

Article 69 – Committee for Bible Translation (CBT)

Advisory Committee 5 presented its report on CBT. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

The chairman welcomed the grade 11 & 12 students of Guido de Brès high school as attending public and briefly explained what a synod does and how it operates.

Article 70 – Appeals and letter re: GS 2013 Art. 110 (Women’s Voting)

Advisory Committee 3 presented its report on the appeals against GS 2013 art. 110 on Women’s Voting. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

For the sake of the high school students the chairman at this point had the fraternal delegates introduce themselves.

Article 71 – Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv = RCN)

Advisory Committee 1 presented its report on the GKv. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 72 – Closing devotions and adjournment

A fraternal delegate was welcomed. Some housekeeping matters were addressed. The chairman spoke some further words to the high school students. He then asked those present to sing Hymn 52:1,2,3,4,5.

Synod was adjourned for committee work.

**Day 5 — Evening Session
Monday, May 16, 2016**

Article 73 – Reopening

The chairman noted all synod members were present. The audience, fraternal delegates and CRTS professors were welcomed. He had those present sing Psalm 78:1,2.

Article 74 – URCNA – Fraternal Address

The chairman introduced the Revs. John Bouwers, Steve Swets, and William Van Hal, fraternal delegates of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). The Rev. Bouwers addressed Synod, passing on greetings. He outlined the situation of the URCNA. He also spoke on the history of our relationship and its current state, describing how and why the relationship has stalled in Phase II. The full text of his address can be found in *Appendix 11*. The Rev. J. VanWoudenberg responded with appropriate words.

Article 75 – CRTS – Principal Address

The chairman introduced the Senate members of the CRTS present at the synod this evening: Dr. Gerhard Visscher, Dr. Arjan de Visser, Dr. Jason Van Vliet, and Dr. Theodore VanRaalte (Dr. John Smith was in Australia on sabbatical). Dr. Visscher addressed Synod, describing, among others, the accreditation of the CRTS and the need for more students with a view to the many vacancies in the CanRC and FRCA. The full text of his address can be found in *Appendix 12*.

Article 76 – CRTS – Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report from the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) (8.2.11)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Dunnville (8.3.4.1), Fergus-Maranatha (8.3.4.2), Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.4.3) and Toronto-Bethel (8.3.4.4)
- 1.3 Letter from the Board of Governors of the CRTS (8.1.4)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The report of the Board of Governors [hereafter “the Board”] provides an overview of its efforts to ensure the continued operation of the Theological College in Hamilton (CRTS). With the faithful support of the churches the work, training and instruction at CRTS has continued without interruption since the last General Synod. The Board appreciates the contribution of the non-teaching staff to the smooth running of CRTS. Since GS 2013, eleven students have graduated with an M.Div.
- 2.2 Dr. T. VanRaalte was duly appointed and installed as professor of Ecclesiology.
- 2.3 Dr. T. VanRaalte successfully defended his dissertation, entitled “Antoine de Chandieu (1534-1591): One of the Fathers of Reformed Scholasticism,” and received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
- 2.4 Available for distribution is a publication titled *Correctly Handling the Word of Truth* edited by Dr. M. te Velde (Theological University Kampen (TUK)) and Dr. G.H. Visscher.
- 2.5 Dr. J. Smith and Dr. J. Van Vliet are eligible for tenure.
- 2.6 Dr. G.H. Visscher’s term as principal expires in 2017. The Board seeks approval to appoint Dr. J. Van Vliet to one three-year term as principal beginning September 2017.
- 2.7 The faculty is active in visiting the churches in the federation as well as participating in teaching and speaking engagements overseas.
- 2.8 The support of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) for CRTS is reflected not only in the students they send, but also in the significant financial contributions they make. Dr. G.H. Visscher represented CRTS on a speaking tour in Australia in the spring of 2014.
- 2.9 The Pastoral Training Program and the new method of funding internships works very well.
- 2.10 The Seminary was awarded a seven-year accreditation period in 2013. Reports on aspects of CRTS’s operation need to be submitted to the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) at various intervals.
- 2.11 On September 4, 2014 the Board, faculty, staff and other invited participants held a strategic planning session. One of the outcomes of this session was a proposal to adopt a revised Statement of Institutional Purpose (SIP):

Our Identity

The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) is a Christian institute of theology established by and accountable to the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches.

Our Purpose



The primary purpose of CRTS is to train students to serve as effective ministers of the Gospel. A secondary purpose is to produce scholarly and popular resources which will serve God's people throughout the world.

Our Basis

CRTS submits to the infallible Word of God and is faithful to the ecumenical creeds and the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt.

Our Core Values

- Serving our supporting churches
- Pursuing academic excellence
- Cultivating pastoral effectiveness
- Promoting the Reformed heritage far and wide
- Growing in godliness
- Showing the fruit of the Holy Spirit in all conduct and communication
- Exercising good stewardship

2.12 Since GS 2013, the Board has dealt with five matters that required an amendment to the bylaws. These changes have been approved by the Board but, since all bylaw changes need to be approved by General Synod, they submit them for approval. They are as follows:

- [a.] By-law 12.05: The Academic Year still referenced the old semester system. This has been updated to reflect the current reality of a two semester system.
- [b.] By-law 13.01: The definition of the word "dependent" has caused confusion in the past. The definition has been clarified to avoid confusion.
- [c.] By-law 16.01: The by-law stated that all members of the faculty were to be members of the Publication Committee. However, this has been updated to reflect the decision of the Board that only one member of the faculty needs to serve on the Publication Committee along with one member of the Finance and Property Committee and one member of the Academic Committee.
- [d.] By-law 11.06: The duties of the Principal have been updated.
- [e.] By-law 11.08: The duties of the Academic Dean have been updated.

For the complete text of the current By-laws and the proposed changes see Appendix 3 [of the report to GS 2016].

2.13 The Board recommends and proposes:

- [1.] To receive this report and all its appendices;
- [2.] To acknowledge the expiration of the terms of office of the Rev. Dr. A.J. Pol, the Rev. E. Kampen, br. A. Bax, and br. H. Kampen, and to express gratitude for their work;
- [3.] Pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of By-law 3
 - [a.] To appoint, elect or reappoint six active ministers to hold office until the next General Synod and to appoint at least three substitutes from each Regional Synod area, keeping in mind that the By-laws prohibit anyone from serving more than three consecutive terms and also keeping in mind that:
 - [i.] The following brothers were appointed by Synod 2010 and are eligible to be reappointed for one more term: from Regional Synod West, Rev. R. Aasman; from Regional Synod East, Rev. J. Ludwig;



- [ii.] The following brothers were appointed by Synod 2013 and are eligible for reappointment for two more terms: from Regional Synod West, Rev. A. Souman; from Regional Synod East, Rev. M. Van Luik;
 - [b.] To reappoint br. C. Medemblik and br. F. Oostdyk as Governors for a term lasting until the second subsequent General Synod;
 - [c.] To reappoint br. B. Hordyk as Governor for a term lasting from the date of reappointment until the next subsequent General Synod;
 - [d.] To appoint two new non-ministerial Governors for a term lasting from the date of appointment until the third subsequent general synod, with a standby replacement candidate as well. The Board's recommendation for these appointments will be provided after the January 2016 Board meeting in a separate letter, which will also contain curricula vitae.
 - [4.] To request the churches to continue to remember in their prayers the needs of sr. K. Deddens, Dr. J. DeJong and his wife, sr. J. Faber, Prof. J. Geertsema, and Dr. N. Gootjes and his wife;
 - [5.] To approve the appointment of Dr. J. Van Vliet as principal for a three-year term starting in September 2017;
 - [6.] To approve the changes to the By-laws described in this report and to approve the revised Statement of Institutional Purpose;
 - [7.] To approve all other decisions and actions of the Board and of its committees for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 until the date of this Report;
 - [8.] To express gratitude for the support from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia;
 - [9.] To accept the audited financial statements and the report of the Auditors for the previous fiscal periods; to relieve the Treasurer of the Board of all responsibilities for these fiscal periods; to support and recommend the reappointment of Mr. H. Salomons as Auditor until the next General Synod, subject to the discretion and direction of the Board;
 - [10.] To acknowledge with gratitude the financial contributions of the Women's Savings Action to the well-being of the Seminary.
- 2.14 Dunnville proposes the following alternative wording for the 'Basis' of the SIP: "CRTS submits to the infallible Word of God in the Old and New Testaments as summarized in the ecumenical creeds and the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt."
- 2.15 Toronto-Bethel suggests that the SIP should be understood as an internal policy statement. They state "by requiring the adoption and approval by Synod such SIP is elevated to a level of sections 3 and 4 of the Act [CRTC Act 1981] which is not effective nor arguably necessary."
- 2.16 Lincoln-Vineyard expresses a concern with the Board's Recommendation 9.
- 2.17 Fergus-Maranatha and Toronto-Bethel are suggesting certain amendments to Operating Bylaw 12.
- 2.18 Toronto-Bethel makes some comments about tenure and suggests that the churches direct the Board to review and consider their policy on tenure and report to the next general synod.
- 2.19 GS 2013 in Art. 46 adopted recommendation 4.3: "To encourage the CRTS to support the FRCSA [Free Reformed Churches in South Africa] in the training of their

theological students, because of the unique circumstances of the FRCSA theological training program.”

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Synod notes with thankfulness that the work of CRTS could continue without interruption between GS 2013 and GS 2016.
- 3.2 Synod rejoices that Dr. T. VanRaalte successfully defended his dissertation and was awarded his doctorate.
- 3.3 The letter from the Board (8.1.4) supports the tenure of Dr. J. Van Vliet and Dr. J. Smith.
- 3.4 Synod is grateful to the FRCA for their continued involvement in CRTS, as well as their prayerful and significant financial support.
- 3.5 Synod notes with gratitude that the Pastoral Training Program continues to be beneficial for the students and the churches.
- 3.6 Dunnville’s proposed alterations to the wording for the ‘Basis’ of the SIP have merit on the grounds that:
 - a. its terminology is consistent with that used by the churches in the forms for baptism and public profession of faith;
 - b. it is more consistent with the terminology in the Act – CRTS 1981.
- 3.7 Toronto-Bethel makes some pertinent points about the status of the SIP and the issue of Tenure which are best considered by the Board.
- 3.8 Toronto-Bethel and Fergus-Maranatha suggest some amendments to Bylaw 12 which are best considered by the Board.
- 3.9 Lincoln-Vineyard’s concern re the Board’s recommendation 9 ought to be passed on to the Board for their consideration.
- 3.10 The Board’s request to approve all other decisions and actions of the Board and its committees is a legal requirement in accordance with the College Act.
- 3.11 It is important that the particular challenges of providing theological education within the FRCSA be remembered.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To receive with gratitude the report of the Board of Governors [hereafter “the Board”] and Appendix 1 – Annual Reports of the Finance and Property Committee for 2013, 2014, 2015; Appendix 2 – Audited Financial Statements for CRTS for the fiscal years ended December 31st for each of 2012, 2013 & 2014; Appendix 3 – Operating Bylaw 12 with amendments;
- 4.2 To acknowledge the expiration of the terms of office of the Rev. Dr. A.J. Pol, the Rev. E. Kampen, br. A. Bax, and br. H. Kampen and to express gratitude for their work;
- 4.3 Pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of Bylaw 12: To appoint, elect or reappoint six active ministers to hold office until the next general synod and to appoint at least three substitutes from each regional synod area, keeping in mind that the Bylaws prohibit anyone from serving more than three consecutive terms with the actual appointments to be made under point 9 of the present synod’s agenda, to be prepared by the officers of synod;



- 4.4 To request the churches to continue to remember in their prayers Mrs. K. Deddens, Dr. and Mrs. J. DeJong, Mrs. J. Faber, Dr. and Mrs. N.H. Gootjes, Prof. J. Geertsema and Dr. and Mrs. C. Van Dam;
- 4.5 To appoint Dr. J. Van Vliet as principal for one three-year term starting in September 2017;
- 4.6 With regard to the bylaws and the Statement of Institutional Purpose (SIP):
 - 4.6.1 To approve the changes to the bylaws as described in the Board report (Appendix 3);
 - 4.6.2 To instruct the Board to consider the input of the Fergus-Maranatha and Toronto-Bethel CanRC with respect to the bylaws and to make recommendations to the next Synod;
 - 4.6.3 To approve the revised wording of the SIP and incorporate the change proposed by the Dunnville CanRC;
 - 4.6.4 To instruct the Board to consider the input of the Toronto-Bethel CanRC regarding the status of the SIP and to make a recommendation to the next synod.
- 4.7 To approve all other decisions and actions of the Board (and of its committees) for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 until the date of its report;
- 4.8 To express gratitude for the support from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA);
- 4.9 To accept the audited financial statements and the report of the auditor for the fiscal periods ending December 31 for each of 2012, 2013, 2014; to relieve the Treasurer of the Board of all responsibilities for these fiscal periods; to approve the reappointment by the Board of Governors of Mr. H. Salomons as auditor for the fiscal period ending December 31, 2015 and such other and further auditor(s) as the Board may appoint for the fiscal years following December 31, 2015, in the discretion of the Board on a year by year basis until the next general synod;
 - 4.9.1 To pass along the letter of the Lincoln-Vineyard CanRC to the Board to consider;
- 4.10 To acknowledge with gratitude the enormous contributions of the Women's Saving Action to the well-being of CRTS;
- 4.11 To give leave to the Board to grant tenure to Dr. J. Van Vliet and Dr. J. Smith;
- 4.12 To encourage the Board to remember the specific needs of theological education within the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA) (cf. GS 2016 Art. 47 Rec. 4.3).

ADOPTED with members of the Board of Governors abstaining.

Article 77 – URCNA (United Reformed Churches in North America) – Committee for Church Unity – Coordinators (CCU-C)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Committee for Church Unity – Coordinators (CCU-C) (8.2.5)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Orangeville (8.3.3.1), Fergus-Maranatha (8.3.3.2), Glanbrook (8.3.3.3), Hamilton-Blessings (8.3.3.4), Abbotsford (8.3.3.5), Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.3.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 129) gave the CCU-C the following mandate:



- [4.2.1] To discuss with CERCU² the areas of concern or fear in the URCNA that seem to be hindering progress toward a merger with the CanRC;
- [4.2.2] 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;
- [4.2.3] 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;
- [4.2.4] 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.

2.2 Activities of the Coordinators

- 2.2.1 The coordinators, especially the Rev. W. den Hollander as emeritus minister, were able to preach in many different URC, particularly in the United States. This often gave them the opportunity to also address the churches about the Canadian Reformed Churches. The Rev. den Hollander was able to engage in interim ministry in two URC in Ontario, Canada that served to solidify relationships locally between URC and CanRC.
- 2.2.2 The coordinators attended numerous classes of the URCNA where they could officially address these assemblies and take opportunities of a less formal nature to address questions and hold discussions. This included the following classes:
 - Classis Ontario-East September 26, 2013 in Toronto, ON
 - Classis Michigan October 8, 2013
 - Classis Pacific Northwest February 25, 2014 in Ripon, CA
 - Classis Southwestern Ontario March 12, 2014 in Brantford, ON
 - Classis Southwestern Ontario November 26, 2014 in Hamilton, ON
 - Classis Southwestern Ontario March 25, 2015 in Listowel, ON
 They attended and spoke at other events such as office-bearer conferences.
- 2.2.3 In 2013 the coordinators met with the CERCU at the annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) in Flat Rock, North Carolina. They presented the URCNA brothers with a copy of the *Acts* of GS 2013, sought clarification about the authoritative status of the different categories of doctrinal statements adopted by recent URCNA Synods, explained why such statements are disliked in the CanRC, and discussed how to best move the merger efforts forward.
- 2.2.4 By the spring of 2014, the coordinators had visited all of the American classes within the URCNA. Their overall impression was 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. They give several reasons for this:
 - There appears to be little sense of an ecumenical imperative toward union;
 - Some office-bearers have suggested 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 URC in Canada;

² Committee for Ecclesiastical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA



- The (perceived) Canadian Reformed view of the covenant. (The coordinators feel that that this matter was in many ways resolved by a colloquium at Synod Visalia 2014).
- 2.2.5 The coordinators attended Synod Visalia 2014 for the duration of the synod.
- 2.2.6 On September 24, 2014, the coordinators met with the Rev. J.A. Bouwers about how to move the relationship between the CanRC and 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).
- 2.2.7 On November 11, 2014, the coordinators met with CERCU at the NAPARC conference in Grassie, ON, to discuss how to move the relationship between the CanRC and URCNA forward. They discussed:
- How to practically implement the calling/principle regarding unity both locally in Canada and federatively in North America;
 - How Synod Visalia 2014's decision is perceived in the CanRC;
 - Whether CERCU could go to URC congregations where resistance to merger is strong in order to promote the cause;
 - An overture from Classis Pacific Northwest October 14 and 15, 2014 of the URCNA calling on Synod Wyoming 2016 to discontinue all further action, advancement, processes, efforts or steps toward merger at this time.
- 2.2.8 The coordinators met with CERCU during NAPARC in Quebec City from November 10-12, 2015. They noted that the slow but certain progress is encouraging. They discussed the wisdom of having a period of time in which there is no pressure of having Phase 3A on the immediate horizon during which efforts can be made to cultivate our relationship in the USA.
- 2.3 Doctrinal Statements
- 2.3.1 The coordinators sought and received clarification from CERCU on the authoritative status and definitions of the different categories of doctrinal statements in the URCNA. They reported the following:
- 2.3.1.1 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 Calgary 2004 Article 76.B.b., p. 29*). 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 have arisen in the churches;
 - Should be received by the churches with respect and submission, and 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*);
 - May be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31 (Form of Subscription, Regulations for Synodical Procedure 3.4 and Appendix B).
- 2.3.1.2 A "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. A "Pastoral Advice":



- Expresses the collective wisdom of Synod to guide the churches in their pastoral care;
 - 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;
 - 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*).
- 2.3.2 The Fifteen Points adopted by Synod London 2010 were doctrinal affirmations. As such, they may not be directly or indirectly contradicted in preaching or in writing.
- 2.3.3 The coordinators conveyed to CERCU the concern of the CanRC that “doctrinal affirmations,” by their very definition present a particular interpretation of the Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity. As such, with each doctrinal affirmation there is a (potential) narrowing of the range of interpretation allowed.
- 2.3.4 While conveying this concern, the coordinators also articulated two matters they regard as mitigating:
- 2.3.4.1 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 can 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. The coordinators mentioned this also with CERCU in order to be as fair and balanced as possible.
 - 2.3.4.2 Much could depend on how the Fifteen Points are understood. They cite as example point # 5 which affirms that “Adam was obligated to obey ‘the commandment of life’ in order to live in fellowship with God and enjoy His favor eternally (BC Article 14, HC Lord’s Day 3).” Does this mean that an office-bearer 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?
- 2.3.5 When the coordinators mentioned to CERCU 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. Partly because of this discussion 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. The coordinators found that 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.

2.3.6 The coordinators report that it is clear to them that the URCNA is committed to the doctrinal statements made by recent Synods and that these will not be reversed. They also point out that on the North American ecclesiastical scene, churches (including the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)) make statements on various matters in order to further delineate where they stand on the theological issues of the day. They also point out that as reported to GS-CanRC 2013, the URCNA has assured the CanRC that the doctrinal statements about the Federal Vision were not directed against the CanRC, and that the colloquium at Synod Visalia 2014 indicated that there are no significant differences in covenant views between the URCNA and the CanRC. The coordinators opine that we should not consider doctrinal statements of recent URCNA synods as a threat, and should not pursue this matter further.

2.4 Re: Synod Visalia 2014

2.4.1 The coordinators reported that CERCU gave a very positive report regarding unity efforts with the CanRC to Synod Visalia 2014. This report noted that one third of the URC have discovered that the Canadian Reformed are dear brothers and sisters in the faith, while two thirds have not had the opportunity to discover this first hand. The report noted three types of concerns remain: theological (concerns whether we can live healthily side by side with how we teach the doctrine of the covenant), church political (fears of hierarchical tendencies in the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO)), and ecumenical (some are not convinced of the requirement to seek organizational unity). CERCU suggested that if the first two concerns can be addressed, then the third concern will also be alleviated. CERCU requested Synod Visalia to encourage CERCU to propose at Synod 2016 entering Step A – Development of the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union. With this plan the federations would construct a plan of ecclesiastical union which would outline the timing, coordination, and/or integration of the broader assemblies, the liturgies and liturgical forms, the translation of the Bible and the confessions, the song books for worship, the church polity and order, and the missions abroad.

2.4.2 CERCU organized a colloquium during Synod Visalia 2014 on the issue of the covenant involving Dr. Robert Godfrey and Dr. Cornel Venema from the URCNA, and Dr. Jason Van Vliet and Dr. Theodore VanRaalte from the CanRC. The coordinators found that the colloquium served well to clear up misunderstandings: the four participants were on the same page regarding covenant views (cf. John A. Bouwers and Theodore G. VanRaalte, eds. *The Bond of the Covenant within the Bounds of the Confessions: A Conversation between the URCNA and the CanRC* (St. Catharines, ON: Church Unity Publications, 2015)).

2.4.3 Synod Visalia decided:

2.4.3.1 To “table indefinitely” the proposal of CERCU (see observation 2.12.1);

2.4.3.2 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);

2.4.3.3 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 (Article 69,



- Recommendation 1). The ground for this decision is that the two federations are not yet in Phase 3A where such work belongs;
- 2.4.3.4 To reiterate with Synod Nyack 2012 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).
- 2.4.4 Reflecting on these decisions of Synod Visalia 2014 the coordinators state the following:
- 2.4.4.1 While “tabling indefinitely” the proposal of CERCU is disappointing, we can be thankful that the recommendations were not defeated.
- 2.4.4.2 The decision reported in 2.4.3.3 above is a departure from the approach of previous Synods. While the point about Phase 3A is true, the PJCO committee had been working for several years already in anticipation of a future merger, thereby doing groundwork for such a merger.
- 2.4.4.3 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.
- 2.4.5 Synod Visalia also decided:
- 2.4.5.1 To appoint the Rev. Richard Bout to serve as Missions Coordinator;
- 2.4.5.2 To adopt 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 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);
- 2.4.5.3 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;
- 2.4.5.4 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 Calvinist Reformed Church (GGRC) in Indonesia;



- 2.4.5.5 To discontinue Ecumenical Contact (Phase One) with the Free Protestant Church in Argentina;
 - 2.4.5.6 To 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);
 - 2.4.5.7 To enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase Two) with the United Reformed Churches of Congo (URCC) (Article 33 and 54).
- 2.5 Developments since Synod Visalia 2014
- 2.5.1 Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 (Article 30) adopted an overture "...to overture Synod Wyoming 2016 to direct CERCUC 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." The coordinators supply the following grounds:
 - 2.5.1.1 Ground #2 adduces that "...two-thirds of the federation does not approve of unification with the Canadian Reformed Churches and is resistant to CERCUC's proceedings." The coordinators note that this is based on a misreading of CERCUC's report to Synod Visalia 2014.
 - 2.5.1.2 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".
 - 2.5.1.3 Ground #6 states, "Phase II Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches presently satisfies biblical requirements for pursuing Christian unity".
 - 2.5.1.4 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."
 - 2.5.2 Commenting on this overture the coordinators point out that it 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." At the same time this overture goes even further than the decision to "table indefinitely" of Synod Visalia, and if Synod Wyoming 2016 adopts this overture then that will spell the end of merger in the foreseeable future.
 - 2.5.3 Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 also adopted an overture for Synod 2016 "...to declare that the PJCO (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." This overture asserts that the PJCO "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.
 - 2.5.4 That this overture is going to Synod Wyoming 2016 is seen by the coordinators as indication that we are still a long way from agreement on how a merged federation would operate.



- 2.5.5 Classis Central US April 13-14, 2015 (Article 35) adopted an overture for Synod 2016 to change the mandate of CERCU. The current mandate of CERCU 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 reads: “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 faith and practice, where feasible, 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.” In explanation, Ground #6 states: “The current terminology of ‘With a view toward complete church unity...’ appears to be used by the committee 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.”
- 2.5.6 About this overture, the committee comments that though it is not as far-reaching as the overture from Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014, it 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. If adopted, the message to CERCU with respect to dealings with the CanRC will be clear. Even if not adopted by Synod Wyoming 2016, in the opinion of the coordinators the fact that it was adopted at a classis gives further evidence of discomfort in the URCNA with merger efforts.
- 2.6 Reflecting on developments of the last number of years the coordinators note that while the future for unity efforts looks less hopeful, we have to await the outcome of Synod Wyoming 2016. They therefore urge prayer that the vision of Synod Escondido 2001, which agreed to the Phase Two relationship and looked beyond to eventual merger, may not be lost. The coordinators at the same time state that there has been a gradual but steady movement towards each other, and positive remarks were heard at a classis in the Eastern United States, “Why are churches holding to the Three Forms of Unity not united?” They also state that we should not lose sight of the many blessings that we enjoy in our relationship as Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF), all of which are the result of a slow but steady growing together over a period of twenty years. The coordinators mention specific matters such as pulpit exchanges, working together on evangelistic efforts, care for the handicapped, and Reformed schooling.
- 2.7 The committee recommends that GS 2016 decide:
- 2.7.1 That the Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity have completed their mandate given by GS 2013;
 - 2.7.2 To consider the matter of doctrinal statements finished;
 - 2.7.3 To reappoint Coordinators for the CCU;
 - 2.7.4 To give the Coordinators for the CCU a specific and well-defined mandate.



2.8 Letters from the Churches

- 2.8.1 A number of churches indicate by letter their appreciation for the extent of the efforts of the Revs. W. DenHollander and C.J. VanderVelde to interact with the URCNA churches in the United States and Canada.
- 2.8.2 Orangeville, Glanbrook-Trinity, and Lincoln-Vineyard express disappointment with the lack of progress in moving to Phase 3 in the relationship with the URCNA.
- 2.8.3 Orangeville considers that the Phase 2 relationship with the URCNA will not progress to Phase 3 in light of the decisions of Synod Visalia 2014 and recommends that the relationship should be described as EF and should be assigned to the CCCNA. This change would recognize the character of the current relationship while still extending the right hand of fellowship.
- 2.8.4 Glanbrook-Trinity and Lincoln-Vineyard recommend the reappointment of the CCU and to mandate the committee to await the opportunities for ongoing interaction afforded by the decisions of URCNA Synod Wyoming 2016.
- 2.8.5 Hamilton-Blessings observes that progress towards unity is stalled at the federative level and as such the CCU mandate should be suspended. They request synod to encourage the churches to pursue unity at a local level through local church interaction, which would be in keeping with the recommendations of recent URCNA synods to their member churches. These efforts could include “pulpit exchanges, joint projects supporting the community and promoting the gospel, joint catechism classes and Bible studies, and even the merger of URCNA and CanRC congregations where size and ministerial vacancies dictate that this makes sense.”
- 2.8.6 Abbotsford reflects that they have experienced a fruitful relationship of sharing and understanding with the URCNA locally and offer this as a measure of encouragement to continue the work of the CCU.
- 2.8.7 Fergus-Maranatha and Abbotsford encourage synod to reappoint the CCU as a meaningful gesture of commitment from the CanRC for unity with the URCNA.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The Coordinators for CCU fulfilled their mandate. The Coordinators are especially to be commended for their extensive effort to fulfill point 2.1.2 above. This is also reflected in a number of the letters from the churches.
- 3.2 The CanRC continue to be encouraged and blessed by their fellowship with the URCNA. This is especially true where direct contact between local churches is possible, mostly in Canada.
- 3.3 The clarification by the URCNA regarding Doctrinal Affirmations is helpful for understanding the role of such statements in the URCNA. It is regrettable, however, that the URCNA maintains Doctrinal Affirmations which are binding on office-bearers. To the CanRC these still appear to be extra-confessional statements, and as GS 2013 stated, “the CanRC does not want to be bound by ‘extra-confessional’ statements” (GS 2013 Art. 129 Cons. 3.4).
- 3.4 Areas of concern and fear about the CanRC still remain in the URCNA. It is to be hoped that continued, sustained, intentional contact in local contexts and at the broader assemblies and through the committees will dispel these concerns and fears. Concern and fear should not, in itself, impede unification. Unification should only be impeded if

a concern or fear can be substantiated and proved real. The discussion about covenant, which took place at Synod Visalia 2014 of the URCNA, demonstrates how it is possible to kindly and lovingly address concerns and fears about a particular point. This is the kind of event that can build bridges and transform relationships.

- 3.5 It ought to be noted with gratefulness that Synod Visalia 2014 reiterated with Synod Nyack 2012 that each classis and consistory continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCNA (Obs. 2.4.3.4). At the current time, however, unification seems unlikely to take place in the near future. The following points can be noted:
- 3.5.1 Synod London 2010 of the URCNA decided that the Theological Education Committee's mandate had been fulfilled, and concluded the mandate of the Songbook committee to produce a common songbook with the CanRC for use in a united federation (GS 2013 Art. 129 Obs. 2.3 & Cons. 3.3);
 - 3.5.2 Synod Visalia 2014 of the URCNA "tabled indefinitely" the proposal of CERCU to move ahead with Phase 3A;
 - 3.5.3 Three overtures going to Synod Wyoming 2016 of the URCNA from two classes of the URCNA in the United States, if adopted, would go even farther than Synod Visalia 2014.

Love compels us to state honestly that these developments are disheartening in regards to future hopes for unification.

- 3.6 Love, however, also compels us to continue to work towards merger. The teaching of Scripture in passages such as Psalm 133; John 17; Ephesians 1:10, 2:19-22; 4:1-3; Philippians 1:27, 4:2; Colossians 2:18, 19, 3:14, 15 is clear regarding the mandate to seek unification in Christ. This means that the CanRC continue to feel a genuine longing for unification.
- 3.7 The suggestions from Hamilton-Blessings regarding local interaction provide a tangible way of building unity with the local URCNA congregations. Synod should encourage the churches to cooperate with neighbouring URCNA churches in the manner suggested in Obs. 2.8.5.
- 3.8 The Coordinators should be reappointed to their mandate so that the process of unity and unification can go forward should the URCNA concur at the next Synod of the URCNA. This is also true of the CCU Subcommittees.
- 3.9 Given the potential workload and the importance of the issues at stake, and the need for local engagement, the number of coordinators ought to be increased to 4 – two for the East and two for the West.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 That the Coordinators for the Committee of Church Unity (CCU-C) have completed their mandate given by GS 2013;
- 4.2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) (Phase 2) with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) under the adopted rules;
- 4.3 To encourage the churches to continue to foster relationships with local URCNA churches. These activities could include, but are not limited to, pulpit exchanges, joint community and mission projects, and joint study opportunities;
- 4.4 To reappoint the CCU-C, adding two additional coordinators, and mandating them:



- 4.4.1 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;
- 4.4.2 To discuss with CERCU how to make progress towards federative unity should Synod Wyoming mandate CERCU to pursue this;
- 4.4.3 To monitor any developments in the URCNA with respect to “doctrinal affirmations.”

ADOPTED

Article 78 – URCNA (United Reformed Churches in North America) – Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for Liturgical Forms and Confessions (CCU-SLFC)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Subcommittee for Liturgical Forms and Confessions (SLFC) of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU) (8.2.8)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Fergus-Maranatha (8.3.3.2), Hamilton-Blessings (8.3.3.4), Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.3.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Article 130) gave the committee the following mandate:
 - [4] “To be available to review and compare the Creeds, Confessions, Forms and Prayers of the CanRC and the URCNA with a view to merger.”
- 2.2 The Subcommittee reports:
 - 2.2.1 The latest Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), Synod Visalia, 2014, continued the course set by previous URCNA Synods to work in close conjunction with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) 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.
 - 2.2.2 The URCNA Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee received no mandate to connect with the CanRC Committee. Though the CanRC committee made themselves available to their URCNA counterparts, they received no material that they could “review” or “compare.”
 - 2.2.3 At their recent synod, the URCNA 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 CanRC.
- 2.3 Fergus-Maranatha recommends to maintain a CCU-SLFC. They desire to show that in no way do we seek to hinder our commitment and desire to progress with the URCNA to Phase 3.
- 2.4 Lincoln-Vineyard recommends to reappoint the CCU-SLFC to continue the work and be faithful in prayer, in the hope that the Lord will hear our prayers, and bless our work for the unity of Christ’s church, on the basis of the Scriptures and the confessions.
- 2.5 Hamilton-Blessings recommends, while recognizing that the CanRC still desires to proceed to full unity with the URCNA and that this is not imminent, therefore to suspend all sub-committee work at this time.



3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCU subcommittees are needed in the event that the URCNA decide to continue work towards Phase 3A.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To reappoint the Subcommittee for Liturgical Forms and Confessions (SLFC) of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU), with the mandate to be available to review and compare the Creeds, Confessions, Forms and Prayers of the CanRC and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) with a view to merger.

ADOPTED

Article 79 – URCNA (United Reformed Churches in North America) – Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for Theological Education (CCU-STE)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Subcommittee for Theological Education of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU-STE) (8.2.7)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Fergus-Maranatha (8.3.3.2), Hamilton-Blessings (8.3.3.4), Lincoln (8.3.3.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The CCU-STE was appointed to work with a corresponding committee from the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), should one be reappointed by Synod Visalia 2014. Since Synod Visalia did not reappoint a corresponding committee, the CCU-STE reports that it made no progress in the matter of theological education in a unified federation.
- 2.2 Hamilton-Blessings recommends suspending the subcommittees, including the theological subcommittee, while the CCU and the churches “seek ways to facilitate the work of building unity at the local level.”
- 2.3 Fergus-Maranatha and Lincoln agree with the recommendation from the CCU to maintain a STE. Lincoln states that “we believe that reappointing the subcommittee helps to communicate our continued desire to pursue unity with the URCNA.”

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCU subcommittees are needed in the event that the URCNA decide to continue work towards Phase 3A.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To reappoint the Subcommittee for Theological Education of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU-STE) to be available to work with a corresponding committee of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) should an upcoming URCNA Synod reappoint the corresponding committee;
- 4.2 To mandate the CCU-STE to re-examine 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 promote adequate funding for such an institution(s) by means of assessment per communicant member.

ADOPTED

Article 80 – URCNA (United Reformed Churches in North America) – Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for the Church Order (CCU-SCO)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Subcommittee for the Church Order of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU-SCO) (also known as Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) Committee) (8.2.6)
- 1.2 Letter from the following CanRC: Fergus-Maranatha (8.3.3.2)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 149) gave the Subcommittee for the Church Order (SCO) of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU) the following mandate:
 - [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.
- 2.2 Synod-URCNA Visalia 2014 instructed its CCU-SCO to await further work on the PJCO until after the anticipated decision to enter Phase 3A. The grounds for this were that the work of the PJCO properly belongs to Phase 3A and we are not yet in Phase 3A with the CanRC. [*Acts of Synod Visalia Article 69*].
- 2.3 Synod Visalia also urged the URNCA churches seriously to consider changes to the PJCO and bring the concerns by way of overtures to their classes.
- 2.4 While gratefully acknowledging that Synod Visalia did not disband its PJCO Subcommittee, the CCU-SCO expresses disappointment and confusion with the decisions of Synod Visalia to “table indefinitely” the proposal to enter Phase 3A with the CanRC.
- 2.5 The CCU-SCO responded to the directives from GS 2013 as well as interacted with the letters from the churches passed on to the committee by GS 2013 as shown in their report Attachments 1&2.
- 2.6 The committee recommends that:
 - 2.6.1 Synod thank the committee for the work it has completed;
 - 2.6.2 Synod accept the report and recommendations as a response to the mandate given by GS 2013 and therefore also refrains from entertaining further changes to the PJCO at this time;
 - 2.6.3 Synod mandate the CCU coordinators to seek clarification from the Committee for Ecclesiastical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) regarding the “tabled indefinitely” situation;
 - 2.6.4 Synod reappoint the committee (perhaps with an additional member for continuity down the road) and mandate it to resume its work as mandated by GS 2013 only if Synod-URCNA Wyoming 2016 pursues Phase 3A or mandates their joint CO committee to take up contact with us.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCU-SCO has fulfilled its mandate as best it could.

- 3.2 The recommendations of the CCU-SCO to refrain from entertaining further changes to the PJCO at this time (2.6.2) make sense.
- 3.3 The CCU Subcommittees are needed in the event that the URCNA decide to continue work towards Phase 3A.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To accept the report and recommendations as a response to the mandate given by GS 2013 and therefore to refrain from entertaining further changes to the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) at this time;
- 4.2 To reappoint the Subcommittee for the Church Order of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU-SCO), with an additional member, to be available to work with a corresponding committee of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) should an upcoming URCNA Synod reappoint the corresponding committee;
- 4.3 To mandate this committee to work with the corresponding committee to finalize the PJCO, the Forms of Discipline, and the Synodical Regulations.

ADOPTED

Article 81 – KPCK (Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section on the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the following CanRC: Flamborough (8.3.1.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 155) decided:
 - [4.1] To continue the relationship of EF with the KPCK under the adopted rules;
 - [4.2] To mandate the CRCA:
 - [4.2.1] To continue to discuss with the KPCK its relationship with the IRCK and the RCK, with the goal of seeking further insight into these two federations;
 - [4.2.2] To continue to work cooperatively with the GKv and the FRCA in exercising our relationship with the KPCK in meaningful ways, such as by regular communication, by visiting the General Assembly of the KPCK, and by meeting and interacting with their delegates at the 2013 ICRC.
- 2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:
 - 2.2.1 The Rev. A. Souman and br. J. Vanderstoep attended the 2014 General Assembly.
 - 2.2.2 There were multiple contacts with the Fraternal Relations Committee.
 - 2.2.3 The CRCA received reports by the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) deputies of their visit in 2012 and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) of their visit in 2013. These reports are consistent with the observations of the CRCA delegate visits.
 - 2.2.4 There has been limited contact between the Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK) and the KPCK, and no contact between the KPCK and the Reformed Churches of Korea (RCK).



- 2.2.5 The 2014 General Assembly decided to not participate in the Faith and Order Conference for Unity in which the Roman Catholic Church and the Korean National Council of Churches were to participate.
- 2.3 The committee recommends:
 - 2.3.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the KPCK under the adopted rules;
 - 2.3.2 To continue to encourage the KPCK to further their relationship with the RCK and support us with information and understanding;
 - 2.3.3 To continue to work cooperatively with the GKv and the FRCA in exercising our relationship with the KPCK in meaningful ways and continue to visit the annual general assembly in turn; to also maintain regular communication with the KPCK as well as meet with their delegates at the 2017 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).
- 2.4 Flamborough suggests for the CRCA to cooperate with the FRCA and to limit the delegation to one person.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CRCA continues to have good contact with the KPCK by various means.
- 3.2 The visit to Korea by the Rev. A. Souman and br. J. Vanderstoep appears to have been fruitful in terms of maintaining EF.
- 3.3 We are thankful that there is consistency between the positive reports of the FRCA, the GKv, and the CRCA.
- 3.4 There is no meaningful contact between KPCK and RCK, and resolution seems unlikely.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) under the adopted rules;
- 4.2 To continue to work cooperatively with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) in exercising our relationship with the KPCK in meaningful ways and continue to visit the annual General Assembly in turn;
- 4.3 To maintain regular communication with the KPCK as well as meet with their delegates at the 2017 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

ADOPTED

Article 82 – RCK (Reformed Church in Korea)

Advisory Committee 1 presented its report on RCK. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 83 – IRCK (Independent Reformed Church in Korea)

Advisory Committee 1 presented its report on IRCK. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 84 -- Closing Devotions and Adjournment

Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.

The Rev. R. deJonge read John 4:1-15 and John 7:37-39, spoke some words, led in prayer, and asked those present to sing Hymn 47:1,2,5.

Synod was adjourned to reconvene in the morning.

**Day 6 — Morning Session
Tuesday, May 17, 2016**

Article 85 – Reopening

The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Acts 2:14-21, spoke some words, led in prayer, and had those present sing Psalm 87:1,2,3,4,5. He welcomed fraternal delegates.

Article 86 – Appeal of Ancaster re: RSE 2013 Art. 8

Synod went into closed session.

Committee 4 presented its report on the appeal of the Ancaster CanRC (8.6.10.1) and the letter of br. Jitse M. van der Meer (8.6.10.2). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Synod returned to open session.

The grade 7 & 8 students of the two local schools, John Calvin (Smithville) and ACRES (Attercliffe), were welcomed. The chairman explained to them the operations of synod.

Article 87 – Appeals and letter re: GS 2013 Art. 110 (Women’s Voting)

Advisory Committee 3 presented its report. The report was discussed. During discussion the following amendments were moved and seconded:

Amendment 1

To replace

“Since GS 2013 Art. 110 Cons. 3.3 does not figure at all in their recommendations, we can only conclude that CO 3 did not provide the grounds for Rec. 4.1: ‘That Synod Burlington 2010 erred on church political grounds in its decision to leave the matter of women’s voting in the freedom of the churches.’”

With

“The points raised in 3.4.1 – 3.4.7 are valid.”

DEFEATED

Amendment 2

To replace

“4.8 While the appellants are not agreed that women’s voting ought to be a matter for the churches in common, they are agreed on what CO 30 does not stipulate. CO 30 does not say that a matter for the churches in common is one in which uniformity of practice is demanded.

4.8.1. As we live in federative unity with one another there are matters in which a uniformity of practice is desirable. However, such unity does not require uniformity of practice in all respects. For example, synods



have dealt with the matter of liturgy through the *Book of Praise*, but have never mandated a prescribed order of worship.”

With

“Some of the churches oppose what GS 2013 observed and considered about women’s voting being a matter of the churches in common. A decision of the churches in common means that the churches as a whole, i.e. through General Synod, have made a decision about women’s voting. The point is not that we need to have a uniform practice on women’s voting, but that one church is not allowed to independently make its own decision about this matter. Synod may make a decision that, since the Church Order does not specifically indicate that only male members may vote, this should be left in the freedom of the churches based on their own voting regulations. Thus the churches in common (through Synod) may make a decision to allow women’s voting, without compelling the local churches to all abide by this practice.”

DEFEATED

1. Material

- 1.1 Appeals from the following CanRC: Hamilton-Cornerstone (8.6.1.1), Hamilton-Blessings (8.6.1.2), Vernon (8.6.1.3), Smithers (8.6.1.4), Burlington-Ebenezer (8.6.1.5), Burlington-Rehoboth (8.6.1.6), Langley (8.6.1.7), Ottawa-Jubilee (8.6.1.8), Cloverdale (8.6.1.9), Guelph- Living Word (8.6.1.10), Flamborough (8.6.1.11), Aldergrove (8.6.1.12), Edmonton- Providence (8.6.1.13), Burlington-Fellowship (8.6.1.14), St. Albert (8.6.1.15), Brampton-Grace (8.6.1.16), Toronto-Bethel (8.6.1.17)
- 1.2 Letter from the Grand Rapids ARC (8.3.10.1)

2. Admissibility

- 2.1 All of the appeals received from the churches are declared admissible.
- 2.2 The letter received from Grand Rapids was deemed inadmissible as it is neither an appeal nor does it interact with a report submitted to Synod.

3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2013 (Art. 110) decided:
 - [4.1] That Synod Burlington 2010 erred on church political grounds in its decision to leave the matter of women’s voting in the freedom of the churches;
 - [4.2] That Synod Burlington 2010 erred in stating that the exegetical sections brought forward in both the majority and minority reports are “hardly relevant or decisive for the matter of women’s voting”;
 - [4.3] That the churches should return to the voting practice as it officially was before 2010, namely, male communicant member voting only.
- 3.2 The 17 appeals addressed to GS 2016 bring forward Scriptural, church political as well as additional arguments. The concerns expressed in these letters have been summarized below under the following headings: Church Political Grounds, Scriptural Grounds, and Additional Concerns.

Church Political Grounds

- 3.3 Many of the appeals referred to matters dealt with in CO 3, which speaks about the calling to office of office-bearers.



- 3.3.1 Burlington-Fellowship commented that the point of CO 3 (“Those elected shall be appointed...”) is not the binding nature of the vote, but rather the manner in which those elected to office are appointed. Aldergrove noted that the men set before the congregation have already been nominated by the consistory with the deacons. Hamilton-Cornerstone, Cloverdale, and Ottawa-Jubilee point out that the consistory ultimately agrees to appoint these brothers because, prior to the meeting with the congregation, they have been judged suitable for office in light of the qualifications outlined in Scripture.
- 3.3.2 Aldergrove argued that it does not follow from the binding nature of the vote that voting constitutes a participation in the government of the church. At no stage of the process does the consistory cede its authority to the congregation. In the opinion of Burlington-Fellowship, CO 3 expressly removes the authority from the congregation. Hamilton-Cornerstone concludes that if voting can be considered an act of governance, then even men who are not office-bearers should also be unable to vote.
- 3.3.3 Ottawa-Jubilee and Hamilton-Cornerstone referenced the following consideration from GS 1980: “It must be noted that participation in an election does not necessarily mean partaking in the government itself” (Art. 83 Cons. 3).
- 3.3.4 Cloverdale highlights that while decisions in which the congregation participates are normally binding—because the consistory decides in advance to accept the input of the congregation—this is not unconditional. Indeed, consistories, with sufficient grounds, may decide not to effect specific decisions.
- 3.3.5 Hamilton-Cornerstone commented that if the vote of the congregation were considered to be binding, this would in effect imply the existence of a fifth jurisdictional body. Ottawa-Jubilee added that the existence of such a body is foreign to our Reformed church polity.
- 3.3.6 Ottawa-Jubilee observes that it is unwarranted of GS 2013 to interpret the use of the word “congregation” in CO 3 in different ways.
- 3.3.7 Flamborough and St. Albert interacted with GS 2013’s contention that Article 31 of the Belgic Confession “...gives an indication that if the consistory decides to call the congregation together for an election according to Article 3 of the Church Order, this election has a binding character and cannot be seen as advisory only.” Both churches noted that, in addition to guarding against the Roman Catholic practice of hierarchically imposing office bearers on a congregation, BC 31 also addresses the contemporary practices of the Anabaptists. These congregations indicated that the phrase “lawful election of the church” should not be read as implying that the election of the congregation is binding. Rather, read in its historical context, this phrase was written in opposition to the Anabaptist practice of allowing men to ascend to office on the authority of some form of personal and internal call, and is therefore not germane to CO 3.
- 3.4 Many of the appeals also referred to matters dealt with in CO 30, which states, “A major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common.”
- 3.4.1 Vernon, Smithers, Burlington-Rehoboth, Brampton-Grace, and Toronto-Bethel agreed that this is a matter for the churches in common since past synods have dealt with it, but they point out that this does not mean each church must have the



same local regulations on the matter. Toronto-Bethel added that because past synods came to no clear conclusions, GS 2010 was right to leave it up to the local churches.

- 3.4.2 Burlington-Ebenezer and Burlington-Fellowship argued that women’s voting is not a matter of the churches in common. They say that only matters about which Scripture and confessions are clear can be covered by CO 30; to the extent that the CO does not regulate a matter, synod is not permitted to compel a church to follow a particular practice. In fact, doing so is lording it over the churches and a breach of CO 74.
- 3.4.3 Langley, Cloverdale, Aldergrove, Ottawa-Jubilee, Burlington-Fellowship and Flamborough argued that stating women’s voting is a matter of the churches in common because it has been considered to be such over many synods, does not mean that it is such. GS 2013 did not prove it to be a matter for the churches in common. Cloverdale further argued that CO 3, Acts 1:23-26, and Acts 6:1-7 show it is a matter of the local church.

Scriptural Grounds

3.5 Many of the appeals referred to GS 2013’s use of Scripture in general:

- 3.5.1 Burlington-Ebenezer observed that GS 2013 did not “state or decide that allowing sisters to vote for office bearers is contrary to Scripture.”
- 3.5.2 GS 2013 said, “Synod 2010 erred in stating that the exegetical sections brought forward in both the majority and minority reports are ‘hardly relevant or decision for the matter of women’s voting’” (art. 110 cons. 3.4). Burlington-Rehoboth, Langley, and Toronto-Bethel argue that, in saying this, GS 2013 should have proven that these exegetical sections *are* relevant or decisive, but GS 2013 did not do this.
- 3.5.3 Flamborough, Vernon, Edmonton-Providence, St. Albert, and Brampton-Grace note that it is not enough for GS 2013 in Cons. 3.4 to state that Scripture speaks to the matter of women voting; GS 2013 must also show how Scripture speaks to the matter.
- 3.5.4 Smithers opines that GS 2010 was correct to state that Scripture “does not provide instructions” (Art. 176 Cons. 3.10) on the issue of sisters participating in the vote. It says, when Scripture does not speak decisively on a matter, the matter should be left to the local church.
- 3.5.5 Guelph-Living Word observes that GS 2010 did interact with the Scriptural data and did so adequately.
- 3.6 A number of the appeals took issue with GS 2013’s application of texts that deal with headship (Gen. 2, Eph. 5:22-33, 1 Pet. 3:5, 1 Cor. 11:2-16, 14:33b-34, 1 Tim. 2:11-13, Acts 1:23-26, Acts 6:1-7; Cons. 3.5).
- 3.6.1 Hamilton Cornerstone observes that the texts referenced by Synod 2013 do not show that voting is a matter of having authority over a man.
- 3.6.2 Ottawa-Jubilee, Cloverdale, Guelph-Living Word, Aldergrove, Edmonton-Providence, St. Albert, Hamilton-Cornerstone and Brampton-Grace observe that Synod 2013 fails to show the Scriptural connection between male headship and voting. Further, St. Albert contends that 2013 misrepresented the Scriptural passages about male headship as speaking about general male headship.



- 3.6.3 Aldergrove, Hamilton-Cornerstone, and St. Albert observe that GS 2013 does not prove that women’s voting undermines male headship, and that GS 2013 does not prove that there is a concept of general headship that would be violated by women voting. Burlington-Fellowship says that GS 2013 does not prove that there is a concept of general male headship and that if there is that it is threatened by women voting.
- 3.6.4 Edmonton-Providence and St. Albert observe that GS 2013 does not prove that women are not part of the congregation or assembly referenced in Acts 1:23-26 and Acts 6:1-7.

Additional Concerns

- 3.7 Many of the churches also raised other concerns with respect to the decision of GS 2013 on this matter.
 - 3.7.1 GS 2013 (Art. 110 Cons. 3.6) gives some weight to the number of churches who were against women’s voting. Hamilton-Cornerstone, Burlington-Rehoboth, Ottawa-Jubilee, Guelph-Living Word, Aldergrove, Edmonton-Providence and Burlington-Fellowship contend that GS 2013 ought not to have been swayed by the number of churches on either side of the issue. These churches point out that synods are to make decisions on the basis of what is right, not on the basis of how many letters are received on a particular issue.
 - 3.7.2 With respect to the claim by GS 2013 that the decision of GS 2010 failed to bring rest in the churches:
 - 3.7.2.1 Langley says that GS 2013’s decision—with its lack of persuasive biblical and church orderly reasoning—will bring more unrest, in the federation as a whole and in their local congregation.
 - 3.7.2.2 Flamborough says that the point is not whether a decision will put an end to unrest in the churches, but whether it “can be defended on scriptural, confessional, and church orderly grounds.”
 - 3.7.2.3 Ottawa-Jubilee, Burlington-Fellowship, Cloverdale, and Edmonton-Providence note that GS 2013 provided no evidence for its claims that there is division among the churches and that this issue has caused unrest.
 - 3.7.2.4 Aldergrove and Edmonton-Providence say that GS 2013’s comments about unrest are a subjective opinion and as such should not play a role in an ecclesiastical decision.
 - 3.7.2.5 Brampton-Grace, Burlington-Rehoboth, Flamborough, and Smithers refer to the history of the matter of women’s voting and note that the issue was a source of unrest long before GS 2010’s decision.
 - 3.7.3 GS 2013 (Art 110 Cons. 3.7) suggests, “if any of the churches, after study and based on biblical evidence, come to the conclusion that the practice of male only voting should be changed, this church ought to work on building a consensus among the churches by going the ecclesiastical way....” Flamborough, Burlington-Fellowship, Cloverdale, Edmonton-Providence, and St. Albert feel Synod 2013 has attempted to prevent churches from appealing their decision according to CO 31 by telling them that they must go the ecclesiastical route of CO 30. Hamilton-Cornerstone interacts with this in the context of the “churches in common” issue. They note that matters for the churches in common are properly dealt with at synod itself (CO 30).



- 3.7.4 GS 2013 (Art. 110 Cons. 3.8) considers that contemporary culture should not determine “the way in which we understand Scripture for our time today.” At the same time GS 2013 considers that “the election of office bearers gives a good opportunity to the churches to show that they do not merely go along with the secular trend regarding the position of man and women.” Burlington-Rehoboth contends that the election of office bearers should not be used for anything beyond its function in the election of office bearers. Ottawa-Jubilee, Cloverdale, Aldergrove, Edmonton-Providence, Burlington-Fellowship and St. Albert state either that (1) Synod 2013 has not proven that the congregations who have implemented women’s voting have succumbed to the culture of the day and/or (2) that there is even a link between our culture and the practice of women’s voting and/or (3) that we must be guided by the Word of God and not culture.
- 3.7.5 In relation to the word “should” in GS 2013 Art. 110 Rec. 4.3 Acts Jubilee contends that it is an expression of a moral opinion. Synod should make judgments, not express moral opinions.
- 3.7.6 GS 2013 Art. 110 Rec. 4.3 refers to male only voting as the official practice of our churches. Cloverdale, Flamborough and Toronto-Bethel contend that prior to Synod 2010 the churches had no official position on the matter of voting rights. Cloverdale adds that that makes it impossible for churches to comply with this recommendation.
- 3.7.7 Burlington-Ebenezer and Hamilton-Cornerstone raise the point that we have sister-church relationships with several federations that allow for women’s voting, and this has not been a barrier to positive fraternal relations.

4. Considerations

- 4.1 Since CO 31 states that “whatever may be agreed shall be considered settled and binding unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order,” GS 2013 needed to prove that the decisions of Synod 2010 were in conflict with either Scripture or the Church Order. What follows will deal with Scripture and Church Order (CO 3 and CO 30), following the order of CO 31.

Scripture

- 4.2 The appellant churches are correct to state that GS 2013 did not show how Scripture, in the passages it cites, affects the matter of women voting.
- 4.2.1 GS 2013 does not demonstrate (from texts such as Acts 1:23-26 and Acts 6:1-7) that women did not participate when office-bearers were chosen.
- 4.2.2 GS 2013 does not demonstrate that male headship is undermined by women voting.
- 4.3 GS 2013 (Art. 110 Cons 3.5), “the Bible does not spell out how this calling took place or how it should take place” Rather, Scripture indicates only that “this choice happens within the assembly of God’s people.” As a result of this recognition, Cons. 3.5 does not support Rec. 4.2: “That Synod Burlington 2010 erred in stating that the exegetical sections brought forward in both the majority and minority reports are ‘hardly relevant or decisive for the matter of women’s voting.’”
- 4.4 It has not been proven that Scripture speaks decisively on the matter of women voting—as has been demonstrated by the long history of inconclusive debate in our churches.



Church Order – CO 3

- 4.5 The appellants are correct that GS 2013 has not proven that CO 3 affects the matter of women voting.
- 4.5.1 GS 2013 does not demonstrate that CO 3 supports the binding nature of a vote for office-bearers.
- 4.5.2 GS 2013 does not demonstrate that CO 3 supports the authoritative nature of a vote for office-bearers.
- 4.6 GS 2013 (Art. 110 Cons 3.3) says, “However, it should be granted that this article gives an indication that if the consistory decides to call the congregation together for an election according to Article 3 of the Church Order, this election has a binding character and cannot be seen as advisory only.” GS 2013 contends that elections have a binding character. Even if such a point were conceded, they themselves do not show how this leads to the conclusion of male-only voting. Since GS 2013 Art. 110 Cons. 3.3 does not figure at all in their recommendations, we can only conclude that CO 3 did not provide the grounds for Rec. 4.1: “That Synod Burlington 2010 erred on church political grounds in its decision to leave the matter of women’s voting in the freedom of the churches.”

Church Order CO 30

- 4.7 Since GS 2013 decided that GS 2010 erred on church political grounds in leaving the matter in the freedom of the churches, this suggests that GS 2013 judged the decisions of GS 2010 to be in error in the light of CO 30, which states, “A major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common.”
- 4.8 While the appellants are not agreed that women’s voting ought to be a matter for the churches in common, they are agreed on what CO 30 does not stipulate. CO 30 does not say that a matter for the churches in common is one in which uniformity of practice is demanded.
- 4.8.1 As we live in federative unity with one another there are matters in which a uniformity of practice is desirable. However, such unity does not require uniformity of practice in all respects. For example, synods have dealt with the matter of liturgy through the *Book of Praise*, but have never mandated a prescribed order of worship.
- 4.9 GS 2013 is correct that if women’s voting was not a matter for the churches in common then prior synods should not have dealt with the matter (Art. 110 Cons. 3.2). Churches that considered prior synods to be in error in this respect ought to have appealed these prior decisions.
- 4.10 Since a matter for the churches in common is not necessarily a matter in which uniformity of practice is demanded, the appellants are correct that the decision of GS 2010 does not contravene CO 30.

Other

- 4.11 The appellants raised many other issues with the decision of GS 2013 on women’s voting as expressed above in Observations 3.7.1-3.7.7. These correspond to GS 2013’s Considerations 3.6-3.8. Since CO 31 demands that decisions of previous assemblies be judged on the grounds of Scripture and Church Order, these issues raised by the appellants are not ultimately relevant for GS 2016 to render a judgment in this matter.



5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 GS 2013 erred in that it did not prove that GS 2010 Art. 176 Rec. 4.3 was in conflict with Scripture (CO 31);
- 5.2 GS 2013 erred in that it did not prove that GS 2010 Art. 176 Rec. 4.3 was in conflict with the Church Order (CO 31);
- 5.3 GS 2013 erred in overturning the decision of GS 2010 Art. 176 Rec. 4.3: “That any arrangement for the election of office bearers that goes beyond what has been agreed upon by the churches in Article 3 CO is a matter of the local regulations, adopted for that purpose by the consistory with the deacons”.

ADOPTED

Article 88 – IRB (Reformed Churches in Brazil)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section on the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) (8.2.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 133) decided:
 - [4.1] To continue the relationship of EF with the IRB under the adopted rules;
 - [4.2] To mandate the CRCA to use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to these churches.
- 2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:
 - 2.2.1 Biannually, the IRB gather in Concílio, the sole broader assembly in this federation of seven instituted churches. Brs. C. DeHaas and K. van Delden attended the first Concílio in 2014 in Maragogi, and Br. O. Bouwman attended the second Concílio in 2014 in Esperança.
 - 2.2.2 Contact was also made through missionaries and mission aid workers, as well as informal discussion at the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).
 - 2.2.3 The CRCA is aware that the IRB and the participating Canadian mission boards are making efforts to more clearly define cooperation protocols.
 - 2.2.4 Significant decisions at the Concílios include:
 - 2.2.4.1 Matters related to the ongoing evolution of the John Calvin Institute—the federation’s seminary established in 2011—have the close attention of churches. By now the first three students have completed their regular course of study there, have passed Concílio examinations, and are involved in internship programs;
 - 2.2.4.2 The IRB communicates distress about developments in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv), which is one of their sister-churches;
 - 2.2.4.3 There is a large federation of Presbyterian Churches in Brazil (Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – IPB). After observing concerns and trends in this federation, Concílio decided: “to encourage pastors and churches of our federation to enter into and continue informal contacts with the IPB at the local level.” Concílio also encouraged further study of Westminster Standards

and other IPB documents “so that we can understand the challenges and strengths of IPB and prepare for possible future relationships.”

2.3. The committee recommends:

- 2.3.1 To express gratitude for the continued growth evident in the IRB;
- 2.3.2 To continue EF with the IRB under the adopted rules;
- 2.3.3 To mandate the CRCA to use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to these churches.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CRCA has fulfilled its mandate regarding the IRB.
- 3.2 In view of the strong links between the IRB and the CanRC, every effort should be made to continue contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to these churches and their leaders.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express gratitude for the continued growth evident in the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB);
- 4.2 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the IRB under the adopted rules;
- 4.3 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to these churches.

ADOPTED

Article 89 – NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Committee for Contact with Churches in north America (CCCNA) – section North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) (8.4.2)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Cloverdale (8.3.2.3), Guelph-Emmanuel (8.3.2.4), Toronto-Bethel (8.3.2.22)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 77) gave the CCCNA the following mandate in regard to NAPARC:
 - [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).”
- 2.2 The committee participated in the annual meetings of NAPARC.
- 2.3 In 2013 the rotating chairmanship fell to the Rev. P.H. Holtvliuwer and the 2014 meeting of NAPARC was hosted by the Grassie-Covenant CanRC.



- 2.4 The CCCNA continues to see the benefit of being involved with NAPARC as a forum for discussion of issues of common concern and particularly issues which promote unity among member churches. It helps to exchange insights and consider ways in which we may become closer. Hearing reports from the member churches is both encouraging and motivating. Meeting with these churches gives us a clearer understanding so that we know better how to pray for each other's church federations. It is edifying to see how the Lord helps the member churches battle against our three sworn enemies: 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. Membership also allows for efficient use of time and funds since it is possible to meet with the Inter-Church Relations committees of the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ), Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA).
- 2.5 Br. Les Vanderveen of sub-committee West presently serves on the Interim Committee of NAPARC which prepares the agendas for the upcoming meetings.
- 2.6 There are a number of changes to the Constitution and Bylaws of NAPARC which must be approved by GS 2016.
- 2.7 The changes to the constitution as recommended by GS 2013 in the mandate have been made.
- 2.8 Cloverdale supports the committee's recommendation to accept the revised constitution.
- 2.9 Guelph-Emmanuel has a concern about the application of the "Golden Rule' Comity Agreement". Their concern is that some NAPARC churches are starting church plants and doing home mission work in each other's "backyards". They would like the NAPARC churches to be reminded of this rule at the next NAPARC meeting.
- 2.10 Glanbrook-Trinity has concerns about the application of the "Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations". This is especially in regards to the transfer of members under discipline. They would like the NAPARC churches to be reminded of this agreement at the next meeting of NAPARC.
- 2.11 Toronto-Bethel has some concerns with the lack of definition for the terms "Member Church" and "Unit Vote" in the revised constitution of NAPARC.
- 2.12 The work of the CCCNA often overlaps with the work of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU) and the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) when having discussions with the various church federations.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCCNA has been active in representing the CanRC churches at NAPARC.
- 3.2 Membership in NAPARC is an efficient use of resources in contacting churches in EF and promoting discussions toward unity among NAPARC members.
- 3.3 It would be proper for local consistories/sessions to contact each other if there is a perceived conflict in either the application of the "Golden Rule' Comity Agreement," or the "Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations." Local consistories can also contact the CCCNA for assistance with this.
- 3.4 It would be helpful for the churches if the application of the "Golden Rule' Comity Agreement" and the "Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations" would be discussed again at NAPARC.

- 3.5 Toronto-Bethel's concerns about the lack of definition for the terms "Member Church" and "Unit Vote" should be considered by the CCCNA.
- 3.6 The CCCNA, the CCU, and the CRCA should communicate with each other about their interactions with the various church federations.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) for representing the CanRC at meetings of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC);
- 4.2 To approve the changes made to the revised constitution and bylaws of NAPARC;
- 4.3 To mandate the CCCNA:
 - 4.3.1 To continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC and to continue its active involvement in it;
 - 4.3.2 To convey to NAPARC the approval of the changes made to the revised Constitution and Bylaws of NAPARC;
 - 4.2.3 To raise in discussion at NAPARC, the application of the "'Golden Rule' Comity Agreement" and the "Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations" as a reminder for the Member Churches;
 - 4.2.4 To assist the local churches when asked about conflicts with the "'Golden Rule' Comity Agreement" and the "Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations";
 - 4.2.5 To address NAPARC about a lack of definition for the terms "Member Church" and "Unit Vote" in the revised Constitution of NAPARC.

ADOPTED

Article 90 – RPCNA (Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America)

Advisory Committee 2 presented its report. The report was discussed. During discussion the following amendment was moved and seconded:

Amendment 1:

To augment

"4.2 That the CanRC not enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF)."

With

"at this time"

So that the recommendation read

"4.2 That the CanRC not enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) at this time."

DEFEATED

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact for Churches in North America – section on the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) (8.2.4)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Orangeville (8.3.2.1), Ancaster, (8.3.2.5), Edmonton-Immanuel, (8.3.2.8), Fergus-Maranatha (8.3.2.9), Glanbrook-Trinity, (8.3.2.10), Hamilton-Blessings, (8.3.2.11), Grand Rapids, (8.3.2.12), Abbotsford,

8.3.2.13, Lynden, (8.3.2.15, 8.3.2.16), Willoughby Heights, (8.3.2.17), Elora, (8.3.2.18), Toronto-Bethel (8.3.2.20)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 76) gave the CCCNA the following mandate with respect to the RPCNA:
- [4.1] To respond to the letter from the RPCNA;
 - [4.2] To investigate and evaluate the way in which the RPCNA understands ordination, the nature and root of the office of deacon and the authority of such an office in light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions;
 - [4.3] To investigate further the nature and status of the Testimony;
 - [4.4] To continue dialogue with the RPCNA at meetings of NAPARC.
- 2.2 The CCCNA investigated in detail the matter of women’s deacons. The RPCNA does not consider the office of deacon an office of ruling authority in the church and is therefore open to women. The CCCNA concluded that the RPCNA position on women’s deacons is not an impediment to Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the CanRC. It would be fitting for the CanRC to express disagreement with the exegesis of the RPCNA regarding their position on women’s deacons and to encourage further reflection on the matter.
- 2.3 The CCCNA investigated in detail the matter of the Testimony of the RPCNA. The Testimony is granted equal status with the other confessional standards of the RPCNA. The CCCNA criticized some points of teaching in the Testimony but concluded that overall it is a faithful expression of Reformed doctrine and practice. The Testimony of the RPCNA should not be considered an impediment to EF.
- 2.4 The CCCNA recommends that the CanRC offer a relationship of EF to the RPCNA under the adopted rules, informing them that we disagree with their position of ordained women deacons and disagree with or have some reservations on certain points of exegesis and doctrine within the Testimony.
- 2.5 The CCCNA states in their report (7.5) that they have provided sufficient information to make a decision about EF with the RPCNA. The committee states that there is nothing to be gained by mandating the committee to study the matters further.
- 2.6 Hamilton-Blessings and Toronto-Bethel support the committee recommendation for EF.
- 2.7 Abbotsford supports the committee recommendation for EF, and questions the statement of the committee in 5.2. of the RPCNA report that the exegesis of Acts 6:1-4 represents the position of the CanRC federation.
- 2.8 Orangeville, Ancaster, Edmonton-Immanuel, Fergus-Maranatha, Glanbrook-Trinity, Willoughby Heights, and Elora do not support the recommendation for EF with the RPCNA. They assert that the RPCNA position on women deacons is unscriptural and in conflict with BC Article 30.
- 2.9 Orangeville is concerned that accepting the RPCNA position on women deacons would create the impression that this is acceptable in the CanRC as well.
- 2.10 Ancaster, Glanbrook, Grand Rapids and Elora are concerned about the RPCNA Testimony. They assert that the Testimony contains questionable exegesis and “extra-Scriptural” teaching. The Testimony would be an impediment to EF.
- 2.11 Lynden questions whether EF with the RPCNA will be a good use of time and resources, especially considering the nature of differences in doctrine, confession and church polity.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCCNA fulfilled its mandate regarding the RPCNA through correspondence with the representatives of the RPCNA and through meetings at NAPARC.
- 3.2 The RPCNA practice of ordaining women as deacons is a considerable difference from the CanRC view of the office deacon as we understand the teaching of Scripture and have this teaching summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and spelled out further in the Church Order of the CanRC. The following points of concern against the RPCNA position were noted in the material from the churches:
 - 3.2.1 1 Timothy 2:12 prohibits women from teaching or having authority over men in the church.
 - 3.2.2 Belgic Confession Article 30 specifies that office bearers, including deacons are to be faithful men, chosen in accord with the rule of 1 Timothy 3.
 - 3.2.3 Although the deacons are not tasked with the ruling or governing of the church, the office does, by its very nature, involve the exercise of authority in the church.
Therefore the RPCNA practice remains an impediment to EF between the RPCNA and CanRC.
- 3.3 The Testimony of the RPCNA is to be appreciated for its presentation of Reformed doctrines and practice, but questions remain about some teachings of the Testimony. The RPCNA teachings regarding covenanting and exclusive psalmody were questioned by the CCCNA report and some of the churches. CO 50 stipulates that “on minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected.” Covenanting and exclusive psalmody can be considered “minor points,” but they have confessional status in the RPCNA. RPCNA practice allows for “exceptions” to certain teachings, but this does not change that the Testimony includes points that would be disputed by the CanRC.
- 3.4 Abbotsford is correct to observe that speaking of a “CanRC exegesis” is saying too much. The churches are bound to the confessions but not to a specific exegesis of a particular Bible passage.
- 3.5 The RPCNA can be recognized for their fidelity to the Word of God and their strong Reformed convictions. A formal relationship of EF would be difficult at this time because of the concerns raised in 3.2 and 3.3. This is not a statement of disparagement against the RPCNA’s Reformed faith and witness but rather an expression of conviction that women ought not to be ordained and of reservation about material included in the Testimony.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express gratitude for the Reformed doctrine and practice evident in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA), evident through the contact between the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) and the Inter-church Relations committee (IRC) of the RPCNA;
- 4.2 That the CanRC not enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);
- 4.3 That the CCCNA interact with the RPCNA at the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).

ADOPTED



Article 91 – Closing Devotions and Adjournment

The chairman said farewell to the fraternal delegates from the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv), the Rev. Batteau and br. Bakker, and the fraternal from the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA), the Rev. Boersma, and also spoke words of farewell to the grade 7 & 8 students. He asked those present to sing Psalm 145:1,5.

Synod adjourned for lunch.

Day 6 — Afternoon Session Tuesday, May 17, 2016

Article 92 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present.

Article 93 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 94 – Appeal of Hamilton-Providence re: RSE 2015 Art. 7

Synod went into closed session.

1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal from the Hamilton-Providence CanRC (8.6.7.1)
- 1.2 Letter from br. A. Sikkema (8.6.7.2)

2. Admissibility

- 2.1 The letter from br. Sikkema is admissible, since the appeal from Hamilton-Providence concerns his person.

3. Observations

- 3.1 Regional Synod East 2015 heard an appeal of br. Sikkema against Classis Ontario West (COW) regarding an overture sent by Hamilton-Providence to that Classis. The overture used references to public writings of br. Sikkema as part of the ground for their argument that Article 14 of the Belgic Confession should be changed. Br. Sikkema argued in his appeal that the “admission, adoption, forwarding and publication of the overture constitutes a violation of the ninth commandment as we confess it in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 43.” RSE 2015 Art. 7 is as follows:

Observations:

1. *Br. A Sikkema maintains that he was not given an opportunity to interact with the statements attributed to him. He documents that statements about his views were adopted and forwarded without his knowledge.*
2. *Br. A. Sikkema maintains that the overture includes allegations about him that in his view are false.*
3. *From the letter dated April 18, 2015, it is clear Providence did not give Br. Sikkema opportunity to see or respond to the overture before it was brought to classis.*
4. *There is no evidence from Classis Ontario West March 11 2015 that they ascertained whether br. A. Sikkema was given opportunity to deal with the overture and its statements about his views.*



Considerations:

1. *Regional Synod agrees that Providence and Classis Ontario West March 11 2015 erred in their dealings with br. Sikkema. He ought to have been given opportunity to respond to the statements made about him in the overture. As such, he was judged rashly and unheard.*
2. *At this point it is not the place of Regional Synod to make a judgment on the views of br. A. Sikkema. This is the responsibility of his local consistory as per Art 66 CO.*

Recommendations:

Synod judges that Classis erred in forwarding the overture in the manner that it did - as per Consideration 1. Classis Ontario West Mar. 11, 2015 should have advised Providence to give br. Sikkema an opportunity to interact with the overture.

- 3.2 Regional Synod East decided that Hamilton-Providence and COW erred in their dealings with br. Sikkema. He ought to have been given opportunity to respond to the overture. Hamilton-Providence agrees that this would have been a brotherly gesture and has sent a letter of regret to br. Sikkema.
- 3.3 Hamilton-Providence contends that they did not judge br. Sikkema “rashly and unheard,” for the following reasons:
 - 3.3.1 Hamilton- Providence notes that br. Sikkema received a copy of their proposal. Synod notes that according to br. Sikkema’s timeline, he received it from a third party on February 4, the day it was distributed by Hamilton-Providence.
 - 3.3.2 On February 27, br. Sikkema wrote to Hamilton-Providence about the manner in which he felt Hamilton-Providence misrepresented his views. Council members reviewed his letter prior to classis, and by e-mail agreed that his letter did not change their proposal.
 - 3.3.3 Hamilton-Providence considers that Matthew 18 does not apply in this case, since “all the sources mentioned in the proposal regarding Belgic Confession 14 were taken from public published sources, whether published in print books or journals or in electronic sources online”.
 - 3.3.4 Hamilton-Providence contends that br. Sikkema has to take responsibility for his public writings, and clarify any potential misunderstandings of his position. Hamilton-Providence notes that br. Sikkema has not answered some specific questions publicly asked by br. John Byl in an attempt to clarify his views.
 - 3.3.5 Hamilton-Providence notes that br. Sikkema did not contest their characterization of Reformed Academic, of which br. Sikkema is a co-editor, as a “blog which has promoted theistic evolution and tolerance for it in the Canadian Reformed Churches,” or their observation that he is included in Patrick Franklin’s list of “Prominent Christians who support evolution”.
 - 3.3.6 Hamilton-Providence cites a statement made by the editors of the Reformed Academic blog as evidence that br. Sikkema holds to theistic evolution: “If [theistic evolution] means a combination of belief in God with an acknowledgement that the biological theory of evolution has considerable evidential support, although some aspects are still under debate, then indeed we are guilty as charged.” In his writings, br. Sikkema claims that evolution is “supported by significant and multiple lines of converging evidence”.



- 3.3.7 Hamilton-Providence further cites private conversations that its former pastor had with br. Sikkema some years ago and states that the office bearers have been reading Reformed Academic blog for some years now. In their minds, this shows that they did not judge br. Sikkema rashly and unheard.
- 3.4 In his letter to General Synod, br. Sikkema contends that his letter to Hamilton-Providence of Feb 27, 2015 was written as an identification of specific factual errors and not as a full engagement or interaction with the allegations, that he is under no obligation to answer questions posed by br. Byl, and that references to private conversations are not appropriate as evidence in an appeal.

4. Considerations

- 4.1 When a person or ecclesiastical assembly cites a public work, there is no obligation to contact the author to verify his views. When a person or ecclesiastical assembly makes judgments on a brother's doctrine or conduct based on that brother's public works, they ordinarily have an obligation to verify that they have accurately represented that brother's views.
- 4.2 By failing to give br. Sikkema opportunity to respond to the statements made about him in their overture to COW, Hamilton-Providence has failed to act in a brotherly manner toward him. Synod agrees with RSE's Consideration 1, that "[Hamilton-]Providence and Classis Ontario West March 11, 2015 erred in their dealings with br. Sikkema. He ought to have been given opportunity to respond to the statements made about him in the overture."
- 4.3 RSE considers that Hamilton-Providence judged br. Sikkema "rashly and unheard." This phrase comes from Lord's Day 43, which deals with the ninth commandment, in which God requires that we do not "condemn or join in condemning anyone rashly and unheard." To judge someone rashly and unheard means that one has come to a hasty judgment without due consideration of his position.
- 4.4 Hamilton-Providence testifies that the office-bearers had been reading public writings of br. Sikkema, on the Reformed Academic blog and elsewhere for some time. These writings included not only statements made by br. Sikkema, but also responses that he and others have made to various questions and criticisms of their views. The office-bearers also read and considered br. Sikkema's February 27, 2015 response to what was written about him in their overture to COW. Hamilton-Providence may not have come to a completely correct assessment of br. Sikkema's views, but they have considered his teachings extensively and over quite a long period of time.
- 4.5 Synod considers that Hamilton-Providence's failure to provide br. Sikkema with a copy of its overture to change BC Art.14 is a significant failure. When an ecclesiastical body makes charges against a brother, they are morally responsible to verify with him that they have represented him correctly.
- 4.6 Synod also considers that RSE overstated what Hamilton-Providence did when it used the words "rashly and unheard" in its judgment.

5. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To send the above considerations as an answer to the appeal of Hamilton-Providence.

ADOPTED with delegates involved in judging this matter at previous assemblies abstaining.

Synod adjourned for committee work.

Day 6 — Evening Session
Tuesday, May 17, 2016

Article 95 – Opening

The chairman noted all synod members were present. He welcomed all who were present.

Article 96 – GKv (Reformed Churches in The Netherlands)

Advisory Committee 2 presented a refined report on the GKv. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 97 – Appeals and letters re: GS 2013 Art. 124, 173 (SCBP Mandates)

Advisory Committee 4 presented its report on the Appeals and letters regarding the mandate for the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* (SCBP). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 98 – Presentation of the *Book of Praise*

The Rev. George VanPopta was invited to present the third edition of the *Book of Praise* to Synod and through Synod to the churches. In his speech he outlined the history of the *Book of Praise*. His address can be found in *Appendix 13*. He then presented a copy of the *Book of Praise* to the chairman of Synod for placement in the archives. The chairman received the *Book of Praise*, spoke some words of gratitude, and asked all those present to sing Psalm 22:2,9.

Article 99 – CBT (Committee for Bible Translation)

Advisory Committee 5 presented a second draft of its report on the Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) report, the Overture from the Brampton-Grace CanRC, and the appeal of the Burlington-Fellowship CanRC re: GS 2013 Art. 97. The report was discussed. The report was put to a vote and defeated. The committee took the report back for reconsideration.

Article 100 - Closing Devotions and Adjournment

The Rev. D. Wynia spoke some words, read Romans 1:16-32, led in prayer, and asked those present to sing Psalm 103:1,4,9.

Synod was adjourned to reconvene Wednesday morning

Day 7 — Morning Session
Wednesday, May 18, 2016

Article 101 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Acts 2:22-36, spoke some words, led in prayer, and asked those present to sing Psalm 16:4,5. He congratulated a synod member with his birthday. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.



Article 102 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 103 – Confidential Acts

Article 104 – GKv (Reformed Churches in The Netherlands³)

Advisory Committee 1 presented its report. The report was discussed. During discussion the following amendments were moved and seconded:

Amendment 1

To replace

“To inform the GKv via the BBK of our decision”

With

“To inform the next synod of the GKv in writing of GS 2016’s decision”

ADOPTED

Amendment 2

To insert between 4.4.2 and 4.4.3

“To send a copy of this act of GS 2016 to each of the GKv churches accompanied by a cover letter.”

ADOPTED

1. Material

- 1.1 CRCA Subcommittee for Relations with churches in The Netherlands (CRCA-SRN) (8.2.3.1), including the appendices (8.2.3.2-7)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Burlington-Rehoboth (8.3.1.1.1), Smithers (8.3.1.1.2), Chatham (8.3.1.1.3), Grand Valley (8.3.1.1.4), Langley (8.3.1.1.5), Ancaster (8.3.1.1.6), Fergus-North (8.3.1.1.7), Edmonton-Immanuel (8.3.1.1.8), Fergus Maranatha (8.3.1.1.9), Glanbrook-Trinity (8.3.1.1.10), Grand Rapids (8.3.1.1.11), Taber (8.3.1.1.12), Abbotsford (8.3.1.1.13), Grassie-Covenant (8.3.1.1.14), Cloverdale (8.3.1.1.15), Brampton (8.3.1.1.16), Elora (8.3.1.1.17), Burlington-Ebenezer (8.3.1.1.18), Toronto-Bethel (8.3.1.1.19), Hamilton-Blessings (8.3.1.5), Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.1.7)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 148) decided to reappoint the CRCA-SRN with the following mandate:
 - [4.1.1] To maintain contact with the BBK⁴ of the RCN and represent the CanRC at the next synod of the RCN. If possible, the CRCA subcommittee should be present when this Synod’s letter is dealt with by the next Synod of the RCN;
 - [4.1.2] To inform BBK of our decision concerning female delegates;
 - [4.1.3] To continue to observe developments at the TUK⁵;
 - [4.1.4] To monitor the work of the Deputies concerning the Role of Women in the Church and assess their report as well as the decisions of the next Synod of the RCN regarding that report;

³ In reports and acts the acronyms RCN and RCN(I) can also be found.

⁴ The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad of the GKv.

⁵ The Theological University of the GKv at Kampen.

- [4.1.5] To monitor the ongoing unity discussions between the RCN and the NRC⁶ and to review the decisions of the next Synod of the RCN regarding unity with the NRC;
- [4.1.6] To review the results of the revision of the RCN Church Order;
- [4.1.7] To monitor the results of the RCN's involvement with the "National Synod";
- [4.1.8] To monitor the developments regarding the application of Article 67 of the RCN Church Order;
- [4.1.9] To work in consultation with the deputies FRCA and OPC;
- [4.1.10] To report to the churches six months prior to General Synod 2016 giving special attention to the question whether or not we continue in EF.
- 2.2 Concerns about the GKv have been expressed by our synods over the past few decades.
- 2.2.1 1998: Synod agreed with the concerns expressed regarding commitment to the authority of Scripture and confessions, deviations regarding the doctrine of Christ's suffering, and an article dealing with homosexuality (GS-CanRC 1998 Art. 40 Cons. III.6, Rec. IV.G).
- 2.2.2 2001: Synod noted concerns about the marriage form recently adopted by GS-GKv 1999 and mandated the CRCA to discuss the changes with the Dutch deputies (GS-CanRC 2001 Art. 80 Rec. 5.3.2). Synod also mandated the CRCA to study the concerns expressed about the GKv to see whether the point has been reached that a warning is needed that the GKv are deviating from the Reformed basis in Scripture and the Reformed confessions (GS-CanRC 2001 Art. 80 Rec. 5.3.3).
- 2.2.3 2004: Synod expressed concerns as well. In addition, it stated: "The letters from the churches show that there is concern within our churches about the situation in the GKv. It is important to keep in mind that we should not judge the GKv on the basis of what we know from personal observations, hearsay, or from articles in papers, but on the basis of its official documents." (GS-CanRC 2004 Art. 44 Cons. 4.9).
- 2.2.4 2007: Synod maintained that there was enough reason to monitor the situation in The Netherlands. Further, it stated, "A church federation must be given time to work through the issues confronting it. If deviation is present, it will manifest itself eventually in the official decisions of churches. By carefully following the developments in the GKv in terms of the issues being dealt with by various deputies and in Reports, the committee should be able to keep a finger on the pulse of the GKv. While the committee can be encouraged to read more than just the official documents to get a sense of what is happening, judgments about situations must be based on the official documents." (GS-CanRC 2007 Art. 133 Cons. 4.9).
- 2.2.5 2010: The concerns increased to the extent that a separate subcommittee was set up. It was charged to express grave concerns about the teaching at the TUK and about a change in how biblical hermeneutics are functioning the GKv (GS-CanRC 2010 Art. 86 Rec. 4.4).
- 2.2.6 2013: Synod decided to send a letter of admonition directly to GS-GKv 2014 because of continued growing concerns (GS-CanRC 2013 Art. 165).
- 2.3 GS-GKv 2014 responded by letter to the CanRC letter of admonition. GS-GKv 2014 expressed appreciation for the letter as an expression of love but defended the position of the GKv with regard to the matters mentioned in our letter of admonition.

⁶ The Netherlands Reformed Churches (NGK)



2.4 Reactions from the churches:

- 2.4.1 Several churches indicate general support for the direction the committee proposes. Some of the items mentioned by the churches are:
- Many warnings have been issued by our past synods;
 - It sends a strong signal to the GKv and adds a further clear warning;
 - The recommendation to restrict our Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) will be an encouragement to faithful members of the GKv.
- 2.4.2 Several churches propose specific changes to amend recommendation 2 of the CRCA-SRN report to the extent that the next general synod will make a decision about terminating our EF.
- 2.4.3 Langley proposes to suspend EF with the GKv rather than restrict it.
- 2.4.4 Cloverdale disagrees with the recommendation to restrict EF and instead proposes notice be given to the GKv that the EF will be terminated at GS-CanRC 2019 unless there is meaningful change in the direction of the GKv. They note that the proposed restriction would create a new class of EF and “would punish visitors for the sins of the broader assemblies.”
- 2.4.5 Glanbrook-Trinity indicates that a synod should not be advising consistories as to their role in advising their members who are travelling to The Netherlands.
- 2.4.6 Hamilton-Blessings regrets that the Rev. Dr. Hans Burger was not contacted by the CRCA-SRN and indicates that his views are misrepresented in the report to synod. They propose that synod acknowledge this publicly.
- 2.4.7 Flamborough observes that the CRCA met its mandate to work closely with the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).
- 2.4.8 Grand Rapids supports the EF restriction as a minimum, but sees the case for complete suspension at this time. They indicate that in any case the EF should be terminated by GS-CanRC 2019 if the situation in The Netherlands has not improved.
- 2.4.9 Burlington-Ebenezer supports both recommendations of the CRCA and gives 2 Thess. 3:13-15 as guidance.

2.5 The CRCA-SRN recommends to restrict our sister relationship with the GKv. This more limited relationship should be understood as follows:

- 2.5.1 Rules 4 and 5 for EF which deal with the automatic acceptance of attestations from the GKv and the privilege of the pulpit for GKv ministers are to be considered null and void. Consistories are urged to exercise due diligence to ensure that those whose attestations from the GKv are accepted are sound in doctrine and conduct. Should a church desire to call a minister from the GKv, the concurring advice of classis is required before such a call is issued. In the case of visiting ministers from the GKv, consistories are urged to exercise careful diligence and should be fully assured of the sound doctrine and the godly life of the minister involved. Furthermore, consistories should advise their members who are travelling to The Netherlands not to automatically join a GKv congregation but to be discerning where they worship.
- 2.5.2 If GS-GKv 2017 makes a clear statement indicating that these churches are returning to acknowledging the full authority of Scripture and show that commitment by as yet acting on our concerns expressed in the letter of admonition



from GS-CanRC 2013 regarding the TUK, women in office, and other matters such as homosexuality mentioned in our reports, the normal sister relationship will resume. If, however, GS-GKv 2017 maintains the present course of deformation then by that very fact this Synod will break the relationship of the GKv with the CanRC and the CanRC will consider the sister relationship to have ended.

3. Considerations

- 3.1. From the report of the committee it can be concluded that the committee fulfilled its mandate. The committee is to be commended for the amount of work it did and the clarity with which it presented its findings.
- 3.2. The report indicates that, in spite of the warnings by our deputies and the letter of admonition to GS-GKv 2014, there is no evidence of returning to the full authority of Scripture regarding the items mentioned in the letter; for example, the teachings at the TUK, women in office, relations with the NGK. This is also supported by the official letter from the GS-GKv 2014. In fact, the report from the CRCA-SRN shows that the GKv has gone further in challenging the full authority of Scripture. The report speaks of a “course of deformation.” We note this with sad and heavy hearts.
- 3.3 The GKv delegates to the GS-CanRC 2016 indicated that the GKv understand the concerns of the CanRC but feel that the recommendations of the sub-committee are premature (see address, Appendix 10). They urged this synod to wait till the next synod of the GKv. It is true that the matter of women in office for example, has not yet been concluded in the ecclesiastical assemblies of the GKv. It will be important for our deputies to monitor this development, also in light of the request of the GKv for input by the sister-churches. In regard to the main concern of the CanRC, the apparent lack of authority of Scripture, there is no indication of change since GS-CanRC 2013.
- 3.4 The above outlined history (see Obs. 2.2), as well as the first reason of the subcommittee report (p. 68), show that the CanRC have addressed these concerns over a prolonged period of time. The overview also shows that the CanRC have exercised patience in following due process.
- 3.5 The CanRC have a deep and rich, common history with the GKv. Over many years we have worked together and we recognize the bond we have with many faithful brothers and sisters in the GKv. We also share in several mission projects. The Bible, however, also calls us to speak the truth in love when we have concerns and we are required to address them in accordance with our rules of EF.
- 3.6 Synod recognizes that the GKv are facing many challenges in its Dutch context. To one degree or another, however, we all live in a cultural context that is hostile to God’s Word. Nevertheless, the authority of Scripture transcends culture and needs to be maintained in any cultural context.
- 3.7 Because the situation within the GKv at the local level is “fluid” and there are many differences in practice between local churches when it comes to, for example, living common law, practicing homosexuals, and women in office, the CanRC can no longer automatically accept statements made by local consistories of the GKv. For this reason, it would be prudent to temporarily suspend the operation of the EF rules 4 and 5. These rules are:
 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 open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in their respective churches.

Synod agrees with the CRCA-SRN recommendation that "consistories are urged to exercise due diligence to ensure that those whose attestations from the GKv are accepted are sound in doctrine and conduct."

- 3.8 It must be clear that this suspension of these two rules does not mean that EF with the GKv has ended but rather is under strain. This is a temporary situation in the hope that, under God's grace, this suspension can be undone when there is evidence of change within the GKv churches.
- 3.9 Synod is not in agreement with the committee's suggestion that if GS-GKv 2017 maintains the present course of deformation, then, by that very fact, this GKv synod will break the EF. Synod agrees with the churches which have pointed this out. As to the suggestion of several churches that Synod mandate GS-CanRC 2019 to make a decision about terminating our EF with the GKv, it is not within the jurisdiction of this synod to mandate a future synod to do this. It is our hope and prayer that breaking EF will not be necessary.
- 3.10 The report of the CRCA-SRN identifies several serious concerns regarding an article by the Rev. Dr. Burger, lecturer of systematic theology at the TUK. Hamilton-Blessings questions the findings of the report. It would be important for the CRCA-SRN to further investigate these concerns. The letter of Hamilton-Blessings should be forwarded to the SRN.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express thankfulness for the Subcommittee for Relations with churches in The Netherlands of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA-SRN) for their work;
- 4.2 To express thankfulness and joy to the Lord for much faithfulness in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) as well as grief and disquiet over tolerance of deviations from Scripture and confession;
- 4.3 To continue EF with the GKv, with the temporary suspension of the operation of EF rules 4 and 5;
- 4.4 To mandate the CRCA-SRN:
- 4.4.1 To maintain contact with the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (BBK) of the GKv and represent the CanRC at the next GKv Synod;
- 4.4.2 To inform the next synod of the GKv in writing of GS 2016's decision;
- 4.4.3 To send a copy of this act of GS 2016 to each of the GKv churches, accompanied by a cover letter;
- 4.4.4 To monitor the work of the committee "Males / Females and Office", as well as the decisions of the next GKv Synod regarding this matter;
- 4.4.5 To monitor the ongoing discussions between the GKv and the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NGK);
- 4.4.6 To continue to observe developments at the Theological University of the GKv in Kampen (TUK), which includes paying attention to the article by Dr. Burger;
- 4.4.7 To monitor the results of the GKv's involvement with the National Synod;
- 4.4.8 To work in consultation with the deputies of our other sister-churches;

- 4.4.9 To report to the churches six months prior to GS 2019 giving special attention to the question whether or not to continue EF.

ADOPTED

At the request of the chairman, the Rev. D. Agema led in prayer.

Article 105 – ERQ – Fraternal Delegate Address

The chairman introduced the Rev. Bernard Westerveld and the Rev. Winston Bosch, credentialed delegates of the Reformed Churches in Quebec (ERQ). The Rev. Westerveld addressed Synod, passing on greetings. He described the state of the ERQ and its recent doctrinal struggles. The Rev. Bosch addressed Synod, further describing the state of the ERQ with a focus on its office bearers and its publication efforts. The full text of their addresses can be found in *Appendix 14*. Br. G. Bos responded with appropriate words.

Article 106 – RCK (Reformed Churches of Korea)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section on the Reformed Churches of Korea (RCK) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Flamborough (8.3.1.6) and Glanbrook-Trinity (8.3.1.4)

2. Observations

- 2.1 From the CRCA report, the following:
 - 2.1.1 GS 2013 did not mandate the CRCA regarding the Reformed Churches of Korea (RCK), but implied that more information was needed concerning meetings between the RCK and the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK).
 - 2.1.2 There was a meeting of the CRCA and the RCK delegation at the 2013 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) in Wales.
 - 2.1.3 The RCK were visited by the Rev. A. Souman and br. J. Vanderstoep in 2014.
 - 2.1.4 One of the RCK churches was suspended by the RCK classis in 2015, just prior to the completion of the CRCA report.
- 2.2 Flamborough suggests that contact be limited to ICRC meetings only.
- 2.3 Glanbrook-Trinity suggests to limit efforts and expenditures in exploring these contacts.
- 2.4 The committee recommends:
 - 2.4.1 To mandate the CRCA to continue contact with the RCK, seeking to determine how the talks between them and the KPCK are progressing and to get a clearer picture of the state of the federation.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 As there has been no official communication between the RCK and KPCK, as encouraged by the CanRC for the past six years, continuing this portion of the mandate seems futile.
- 3.2 The RCK values our contact and continuing contact is feasible in the context of our relationship with the KPCK.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To encourage the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to continue contact with the Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK) where possible.

ADOPTED**Article 107 – IRCK (Independent Reformed Church in Korea)****1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section on the Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Flamborough (8.3.1.6), Glanbrook-Trinity (8.3.1.4)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 157) decided:
 - [4.2] To mandate the CRCA to thank the Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK) for their cooperation and discussions and to encourage them to seek contact with the KPCK and the RCK.
- 2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:
 - 2.2.1 Contact was made with the delegates at the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) and the Rev. A. Souman and br. J. Vanderstoep visited the churches in Korea.
- 2.3 The committee recommends:
 - 2.3.1 To maintain contact with the IRCK wherever possible. This will assist us in our understanding of the Reformed church situation in Korea and hopefully better enable us to fulfill the intent of the Ecclesiastical Fellowship which we have with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK).
- 2.4 Flamborough suggests that contact be limited to ICRC meetings only.
- 2.5 Glanbrook-Trinity suggests to limit efforts and expenditures in exploring these contacts.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The reported contact is of value and also helps in CanRC relations with the KPCK.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To encourage the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to continue contact with the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK) where possible.

ADOPTED**Article 108 – Committee for the Needy Students' Fund (CNSF)****1. Material**

- 1.1 Report from the Committee for Needy Students' Fund (CNSF) (8.2.16)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Winnipeg-Redeemer (8.3.6.1), Abbotsford (8.3.6.2), Willoughby Heights (8.3.6.3)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The Committee reports that:
 - 2.1.1 GS 2010 founded the Committee for the Needy Students' Fund (CNSF) as a centralized body responsible to work with all member classes of the Canadian Reformed Churches under the direction and council of the Grassie-Covenant CanRC;
 - 2.1.2 Ten students have been supported since 2012;
 - 2.1.3 Churches are assessed annually based on projected student enrolment and anticipated fees;
 - 2.1.4 Students eligible for assistance apply through the CRTS website;
 - 2.1.5 Following an application for funds, visits are scheduled with each student to determine the level of assistance required.
- 2.2 Winnipeg-Redeemer and Willoughby Heights express some concerns about the functioning and principles of the CNSF. These can be summarized as follows:
 - 2.2.1 Re: Principle 1.6: To eliminate the cut-off date of September 1 for requests for additional funds to allow for the possibility that students have to deal with changing circumstances in their families.
 - 2.2.2 Re: Principle 1.6: It is contrary to CO 20 to expect students of theology to be responsible for their own financial shortfall.
 - 2.2.3 Re: Principle 1.7: The requirement for comprehensive records of expenses is excessive.
 - 2.2.4 Re: Principle 1.8: The allowance for vehicle maintenance is "far too low."
 - 2.2.5 Re: Principle 1.9: Both churches want this principle removed because it is redundant.
- 2.3 Re: Application Process 2.3: Abbotsford is concerned that the CNSF acts too much like a bank which charges interest on borrowed funds, and recommends that interest only be charged where there is dismissal due to unchristian behaviour. They urge synod to instruct the committee to be charitable as the Lord is charitable (Luke 6:34-35).

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee has completed its mandate and has done its work faithfully.
- 3.2 Insofar as the CNSF guidelines have not received a synod's approval (GS 2010 Art. 91 Rec. 4.3; GS 2013 Art. 90 Rec. 4.4.1), the concerns raised by Winnipeg-Redeemer, Willoughby, and Abbotsford should properly be passed along to the CNSF for their consideration.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the Grassie-Covenant CanRC and the committee for their work;
- 4.2 To discharge Grassie-Covenant for the duties completed during the period January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2014;
- 4.3 To re-appoint Grassie-Covenant as the Committee for Needy Students' Fund (CNSF) to look after extending financial aid to those students of theology who are in need of it;
- 4.4 To mandate the CNSF:
 - 4.4.1 To review the current guidelines and procedures in light of Cons. 3.2 above;
 - 4.4.2 To assess the churches annually as per the number of communicant members in the current *Yearbook* based on the anticipated funding required for the year ahead;

- 4.4.3 To report annually to each church of the federation on its activities and to report triennially to each general synod on the same and to conclude this report to synod with appropriate recommendations.

ADOPTED

Article 109 – Appeal of Burlington-Rehoboth re: GS 2013 Art. 125 Rec. 4.4

Committee 4 presented its report on the appeal of the Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC (8.6.3.1). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

The Chairman said farewell to the fraternal delegates from, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA), the Rev. 't Hart and br. Witten. Synod adjourned for committee work.

Day 7 — Afternoon Session Wednesday, May 18, 2016

Article 110 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present.

Article 111 – CBT (Committee for Bible Translation)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) (8.2.14)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: St. Albert (8.3.7.1), Glanbrook-Trinity (8.3.7.2), Hamilton-Cornerstone (8.3.7.3)
- 1.3 Overture from the Brampton-Grace CanRC re: CBT Report (8.4.2)
- 1.4 Appeal from the Burlington-Fellowship CanRC re: GS 2013 Art. 97 (8.6.4.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 97) gave the CBT the following mandate:
 - [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 committee 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.



- 2.2 With respect to 4.4.1, “the CBT does not believe 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. [It is] also confident that the ESV approach does justice to the original text and renders it accurately readable to the modern audience” (p. 6, pt. 5).
- 2.3 With respect to 4.4.2, the CBT concluded that while the ESV scored higher than expected on a readability scale, it needs improvement in some areas related to readability.
- 2.4 With respect to 4.4.3, two churches sent feedback, complaining about readability while advocating for the use of the NIV2011.
- 2.5 With respect to 4.4.4, an interim report was sent to the CBTNIV in 2012. No reply was received by the time the report was submitted.
- 2.6 The CBT recommends that GS 2016 reappoint the CBT and mandate the CBT
 - 2.6.1 To solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV;
 - 2.6.2 To submit worthy translation changes to the ESV editorial committee;
 - 2.6.3 To prepare and distribute a report to the churches in advance of the next Synod.
- 2.7 The term of the Rev. P. Aasman expires this year. The Revs. R. Bredenhof and W. Bredenhof retired from the committee upon taking up their ministry in Australia. The term for both would have expired in 2019. The term of the Rev. D. deBoer ends in 2019 and the term of the Rev. R. Vermeulen in 2022.
- 2.8 St. Albert recommends the following: “Synod Dunnville 2016, if it agrees with the CBT Report that the NIV2011’s philosophy of gender-inclusive language is not sufficient to make the translation untrustworthy or inaccurate, add the NIV2011 as one of the approved translations (along with NIV84, NASB, NKJV, and ESV) and leave the decision regarding the use of the NIV2011 in the freedom of the local churches.”
- 2.9 Glanbrook-Trinity agrees with the recommendations and adds some considerations about methodology, investment in terms of time and money to revert to the NIV, and the benefit of becoming familiar with an essential literal translation, to reinforce the recommendations.
- 2.10 Hamilton-Cornerstone suggests that GS 2016 also recommend the NIV2011 for possible use in the churches.
- 2.11 Brampton-Grace addresses the matter of the five texts in the NIV2011 pertaining to the offices in the church that were flagged to be of concern. They indicate that only two of the texts, Rom. 16:1 and 2 Timothy 2:2, are problematic. Brampton-Grace does not believe that the NIV2011 should be rejected on the basis of two problematic texts. Therefore, they request Synod to make the following decision:
 1. That Synod decide that the NIV2011 be listed with the other faithful translations that may be used by the churches; or
 2. If Synod is not ready to make such a judgment yet, that they mandate the CBT committee to investigate further the points made above and to serve the churches at the next synod with advice on the status of the NIV2011.
- 2.12 Burlington-Fellowship appeals GS 2013 Art. 97. It sees evidence of a “hierarchical tendency of synodicalism” in the way the language pertaining to Bible translations has shifted from recommended translations (GS 1995) to synod approved translations. It notes that while GS 1995 recommended the NIV for use within the churches, it did not give a list

of other possible translations when it decided, “to leave it in the freedom of the churches if they feel compelled to use another translation.” It appeals to GS 2016 to decide:

- A. To recommend the ESV for use within the churches; however
- B. To recognize that congregations, if they feel compelled to use another translation, are free to do so.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The Report of the CBT indicates it has fulfilled its mandate.
- 3.2 Synod should acknowledge with thankfulness the work done by the committee.
- 3.3 The CBT has shown that the gender-inclusive translation philosophy in the NIV2011 does not result in losing anything from God’s revelation. This leaves the questions regarding texts pertaining to office. Brampton-Grace clearly shows that the primary texts pertaining to office are proper translations. Of the five problem texts brought forward, three of the texts (Phil. 1:14; 1 Tim. 2:12, and James 3:1) are acceptable translations. Only two (Romans 16:1,2 and 2 Tim. 2:2) remain problematic. Brampton-Grace has a valid point when it states that the NIV2011 should not be rejected on the basis of two problematic texts. Since the concern regarding the NIV2011 comes down to two problematic texts, there is no need to mandate the CBT to further study.
- 3.4 The appeal of Burlington-Fellowship gives reason to look back at the history of Bible translation committees in the CanRC. From the beginning years of the CanRC, Bible translation has been treated as a matter of the churches in common. Further, it has been the understanding that only translations recommended by a synod should be used. GS 1954 recommended only the KJV be used in the churches (GS 1968, p. 75⁷). Because GS 1954 had made this decision, it was deemed necessary for GS 1968 to speak to the matter of considering the RSV (GS 1968 Art. 45). GS 1968 appointed a committee to study the RSV, but indicated that churches should not use it until the study was completed. GS 1977 (Art. 107) left it in the freedom of the churches to use only the RSV and KJV. It added the NIV and NASB to the list of translations to be studied. GS 1980 added the NASB to the list of recommended translations (Art. 111 C.3). This synod finally recommended the RSV for use “in the worship services and for catechism instruction in order to come to uniformity of practice.” GS 1989 (Art. 88 D.2.a) instructed the CBT to study the NRSV. GS 1992 (Art. 35 IV) instructed the CBT to study the NASB, NIV and NKJV to determine which one translation can be positively recommended for use in the churches. This shows that since the beginning of the CanRC the understanding has been that only translations recommended by general synods should be used. The decision of GS 1995, referenced by Burlington-Fellowship, “to leave it in the freedom of the churches if they feel compelled to use another translation,” should not be read in isolation of the decisions of previous synods. Burlington-Fellowship therefore overstates the case when it speaks of a “hierarchical tendency of synodicalism” in the language pertaining to Bible translations since GS 1995.
- 3.5 While the matter of Bible translations is not prescribed in the Church Order, the churches have considered it beneficial to appoint a committee for evaluating Bible translations. The existence of such a committee has never been challenged. The task of

⁷ Being a reference to “Report of Advisory Committee III on the *Revised Standard Version*” in connection with GS 1968 Art. 45. The reference to GS 1954 would be Article 71.



evaluating Bible translations benefits from brothers with expertise in the matter. The recommendations of the CBT and the decisions of synods ultimately are advisory, as is evident in the way a synod does not prescribe but recommends translations for use in the churches. This approach has led to the situation where currently four translations are used in the federation, namely, the ESV, NIV1984, NASB and NKJV. Since the matter of Bible translation is not addressed in the Church Order nor specified in the confessions, a general synod may not forbid a church from using a particular translation.

- 3.6 Since the ESV is the version recommended for use in the churches and used in the *Book of Praise*, at this point the mandate of the CBT can be limited to evaluating comments on the ESV and submitting worthy translation changes to the ESV editorial committee.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) for its work and appoint a committee with the following mandate:
- 4.1.1 To solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV;
 - 4.1.2 To submit worthy translation changes to the ESV editorial committee;
 - 4.1.3 To prepare and distribute a report to the churches in advance of the next Synod.
- 4.2 To recommend the ESV for use within the churches;
- 4.3 To acknowledge that while it may not be possible to recommend the NIV2011, a general synod may not forbid churches to use it if they so desire;
- 4.4 To consider the above as answering the appeal of Burlington-Fellowship.

ADOPTED

Article 112 – Overture from Regional Synod West 2015 (RSW 2015)

1. Material

- 1.1 Overture from Regional Synod West 2015 (RSW 2015), re: care of theological students by their home church and examination of theological students by their home classis (8.4.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Burlington-Rehoboth (8.5.1.1), Ancaster (8.5.1.2), Fergus-North (8.5.1.3), Hamilton-Providence (8.5.1.4), Grand Rapids (8.5.1.5), Abbotsford (8.5.1.6), Grassie-Covenant (8.5.1.7), Lincoln-Vineyard (8.5.1.8)

2. Observations

- 2.1 Proposal 1 of the Overture (called “Overture 1”) is that “a student of theology should remain in the care of his home church.” The “home church” is defined as “the church that submitted a special attestation to the Theological Seminary, recommending them for study at the Theological Seminary.” The student’s resident church would be responsible for his (and his family’s) normal spiritual oversight and care. The “home church” would assist the student in his specific needs as a student of theology. The Committee for Needy Students’ Fund would provide the funds, but the evaluation of the student’s needs and the recommendation to the Committee would come from the “home church.”
- 2.2 This proposal is made with the following “rationale”:
- 2.2.1 It is important for students of theology to receive the ongoing support and encouragement of the local church from which they originate.



- 2.2.2 This will strengthen the link between the CRTS and the churches.
- 2.2.3 The proposal is comparable to the common practice in the churches of a retired minister having his membership in the church where he lives, while his ministerial credentials remain with the church he last served, and he receives care and support from that church.
- 2.2.4 The Committee for Needy Students' Fund and the home church will assist each other to support needy students in a fair and helpful way.
- 2.2.5 Diaconal needs that arise in the life of students and their families would not fall only upon the deacons of the churches near the CRTS.
- 2.3 The following points were raised by the churches in regard to Overture 1:
- 2.3.1 Grassie-Covenant is concerned that:
- It would not be helpful for the student's home church to be in control of the funding to the student;
 - The distance between the home church and the student's actual place of residence may mean the home church does not have a true understanding of the student's needs;
 - This new system might slow down the process of students receiving aid.
- Grassie-Covenant notes that no church has expressed dissatisfaction to the Committee for Needy Students' Fund in regard to its work.
- 2.3.2 Grand Rapids states that:
- There are no grounds to prove that the home church has a deeper, more personal relationship with the student than their church of residence;
 - There is no evidence that the deacons in the churches where students reside are overburdened and require the help of the home church;
 - The PJCO should not be used as a ground or rationale for adopting this overture.
- 2.3.3 Hamilton-Providence agrees that there are benefits in having students maintain contact with their home church.
- 2.4 Proposal 2 of the Overture (called "Overture 2") is that "a student of theology should be examined by his home classis." The "home classis" is the classis that includes the student's home church (see 2.1 above). This would require a change to Article 4B of the Church Order. The new Article 4B would read: "Declared eligible. Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who 1. Have passed a preparatory examination by the classis of their home church (i.e. the church that recommended them for studies at the Theological Seminary)."
- 2.5 This proposal is made with the following "rationale":
- 2.5.1 This will allow the home church and home classis to be more involved in the training and examination of students.
- 2.5.2 The responsibility for examining students would be spread more evenly among the different classes.
- 2.6 The following points were raised by the churches in regard to Overture 2:
- 2.6.1 Ancaster:
- Supports the current practice that students are examined in the classis in which they reside;
 - Notes that Classis Ontario West, where most students are currently examined, has not asked to change the process of examinations;



- Highlights that Classis Ontario West has used retired ministers and ministers from other classes to assist in conducting examinations;
 - Is concerned about the financial cost of this new system;
 - Is concerned that this new system would increase the burden placed on the students by giving them extra travel.
- 2.6.2 Grand Rapids:
- Wonders which church would issue the attestation for a student to classis;
 - Asks whether the current system is failing in some way. If there is no problem with the current system, the Overture is moot;
 - Raises the practical concern that the Overture will make it more difficult for students to be examined in time to begin their Pastoral Training Program following the third year of their studies.
- 2.6.3 Hamilton-Providence:
- Raises the question whether the home church would take over diaconal care for the student if he would not receive a call;
 - Asks who will take care of the costs of students travelling to their home classis;
 - Asks whether it is possible for students to request that their church of residence would become their home church.
- 2.7 Fergus-North, Lincoln-Vineyard, Burlington-Rehoboth, Abbotsford, and Hamilton-Providence support Overture 1 and Overture 2.
- 2.8 Grand Rapids asserts that if Overture 1 is not adopted, then Overture 2 fails as consequence.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 “Overture 1” is incomplete:
- 3.1.1 The Overture does not contain a clear request for action, nor a statement that can be adopted or taken over by Synod. Neither the statement of proposal, nor the paragraphs under the heading “Overture”, could be adopted by synod in their current form.
- 3.1.2 The specifics of how such an overture would be implemented have not been spelled out. This is evident in the concerns raised by the letters from the churches. Implementation of the proposal would require amending the Support Guidelines, published in Appendix 16 to the Acts GS 2013 for the CNSF. The Overture does not include a proposal for such an amendment, nor does it propose how such guidelines could be constructed. In fact, there is no interaction with the current guidelines at all.
- 3.2 “Overture 2” is incomplete:
- 3.2.1 The Overture does not contain a clear request for action, nor a statement that can be adopted. Neither the statement of proposal, nor the paragraphs under the heading of “Overture”, could be adopted by synod in their current form.
- 3.2.2 The specifics of how such an overture would be implemented have not been spelled out. This is evident in the concerns raised by the letters from the churches. The Overture requests that CO 4B be changed. However, implementation of the proposal would also require:
- 3.2.2.1 Interaction with GS 1958 Art. 188. This article stipulates the guidelines for ecclesiastical examinations in the federation. These guidelines would need to be changed;

- 3.2.2.2 Direction for local classes, whose regulations would need to be changed to accommodate this overture;
- 3.2.2.3 A recommendation regarding possible funding needed to cover the extra cost of travel for the students. This, in turn, could require further amendments to the Support Guidelines of the CNSF;
- 3.2.3.4 A recommendation for how to deal with foreign students.
- 3.3 Although there may be merit to the ideas contained in the Overture, neither part of the Overture can be adopted in its current form.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 Not to adopt the Overture of Regional Synod West 2015.

ADOPTED

Article 113 – Appointments

1. Material

- 1.1 Submissions from: Regional Synod West 2015 (8.1.1), Regional Synod East 2015 (8.1.3), the Board of Governors of the CRTS (8.1.4), the CWeb (8.2.15.1), the CRCA (8.2.3), the CCCNA (8.2.4.1), the SCBP (8.2.9), the Rev. Anthon Souman (9.1), and the CCCNA (9.2)

2. Board of Governors of the CRTS (Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)

- 2.1 Academic Committee:
 - 2.1.1 From eastern Canada: the Rev. J. Ludwig (2019), the Rev. M. VanLuik (2022), the Rev. J. Louwerse (2025)
Substitute: the Rev. D. deBoer
 - 2.1.2 From western Canada: the Rev. R. Aasman (2019), the Rev. J. Poppe (2025), the Rev. J. Slaa (2025)
Substitute: the Rev. R. Schouten
- 2.2 Finance and Property Committee: B. Hordyk (2019), C.H. Medemblik (2022), F. Oostdyk (2022), K. VanVeen (2025), P. Vandersluis (2025). Substitutes: A.B. Harsevoort, R. Hummel, in that order

3. CPTPF (Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding)

- 3.1 The Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC

4. CRCA (Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad)

- 4.1 O. Bouwman (2022), the Rev. Dr. R.C. Janssen (convener) (2025), H. Schouten (2025), the Rev. S.C. Van Dam (2025), Jake VanLaar (2019), the Rev. A. Witten (2022)
- 4.2 Subcommittee for Contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands: the Rev. J. DeGelder, the Rev. J. Moesker, G.J. Nordeman, the Rev. Dr. C. Van Dam

5. CCCNA (Committee for Contact with Churches in North America)

- 5.1 Subcommittee East: the Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt (2019), G. Bos (2022), the Rev. M. Jagt (convener) (2025), J. Temple (2025)

- 5.2 Subcommittee West: the Rev. S. Vandeveld (2025), H. VanDelden (2019), L. Vanderveen (convener) (2022), P. Veenendaal (2025)

6. CCU (Committee for Church Unity)

- 6.1 Coordinators for Canada East: the Rev. W. DenHollander, the Rev. C.J. Vandervelde
6.2 Coordinators for Canada West: the Rev. Dr. A.J. Pol, the Rev. W.B Slomp
6.3 Subcommittees:
6.2.1 Subcommittee for the Church Order: the Rev. Dr. G. Nederveen, G.J. Nordeman, the Rev. A.B. Roukema, the Rev. J. VanWoudenberg (convener), Dr. A. Witten
6.2.2 Subcommittee for Theological Education: Dr. B. Faber, the Rev. J.L. VanPopta (convener), K.J. Veldkamp, the Rev. Dr. G.H. Visscher
6.3 Common Songbook Committee: the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*
6.4 Creeds and Forms Committee: the Rev. C. Bouwman (convener), the Rev. Dr. J. VanVliet, the Rev. Dr. T.G. VanRaalte

7. SCBP (Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*)

- 7.1 A. DenHollander (2019), M. Jongsma (2025), the Rev. Dr. J. Smith (2022), the Rev. D. Wynia (2022) (convener)

8. CBT (Committee for Bible Translation)

- 8.1 The Rev. D. deBoer (2019), the Rev. R. Vermeulen (2022)

9. CWeb (Committee for the Official Website)

- 9.1 J. Koopmans (2022), J. Reinink (2019), the Rev. A.B. Roukema (2022), Darryl Shpak (2019)

10. Churches for Days of Prayer and CO 54

- 10.1 The Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC and the Edmonton-Providence CanRC

11. General Fund

- 11.1 The Carman-East CanRC

12. Auditing the General Fund

- 12.1 The Carman-West CanRC

13. CNSF (Committee for Needy Students' Fund)

- 13.1 The Grassie-Covenant CanRC

14. Archive Church

- 14.1 The Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC

15. Church for inspecting the Archives

- 15.1 The Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC

16. Audit Finances of GS 2016

- 16.1 The Attercliffe CanRC

17. Address Church

- 17.1 The Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC

18. Committee for Publication of the Acts

18.1 The first and second clerk of GS 2016

19. Convening Church for the next General Synod

19.1 The Edmonton-Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church in Alberta

Synod adjourned for committee work.

**Day 7 — Evening Session
Wednesday, May 18, 2016****Article 114 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. He asked those present to sing Psalm 67:2.

Article 115 – GGRI-NTT (Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timor)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Glanbrook-Trinity (8.3.1.4), Flamborough (8.3.1.6), and Toronto-Bethel (8.3.1.8)

2. Observations

2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 126) decided:

- [4.1] To accept the apologies of the GGRI for not having invited us to their first National Synod;
- [4.2] To continue the relationship of EF with the GGRI-NTT under the adopted rules;
- [4.3] To mandate the CRCA:
 - [4.3.1] To discuss our rules for EF with the Committee on Relations of the GGRI and to gather as much information as is needed to come to a good recommendation to General Synod 2016 regarding a relationship of EF with the GGRI;
 - [4.3.2] To gather and evaluate information regarding the GGRI-KalBar and the GGRI-Papua in order to prepare a proposal as to how to deal with the GGRI as a national federation instead of dealing exclusively with the GGRI-NTT, which has become part of this larger federation of churches;
 - [4.3.3] To request input from the FRCA and the RCN;
 - [4.3.4] To try to ensure that a delegation of two brothers is sent to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at a synod of the GGRI-NTT;
 - [4.3.5] To work in consultation and cooperation with the deputies of the FRCA, with Smithville and Edmonton-Immanuel and as much as possible and desirable with other organizations involved in the work among the GGRI, to encourage and support these churches in their efforts to grow in the Reformed doctrine and church polity;
 - [4.3.6] To encourage the GGRI-NTT to seek cooperation with the Reformed Theological School in Kupang (established by Smithville);



[4.3.7] To encourage the GGRI-NTT to seek close contact and cooperation with the GGRC and to monitor the progress of the dialogue between the GGRI-NTT and the GGRC.

2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:

2.2.1 The decisions of GS 2013, including the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF), were passed on to the deputies of the GGRI-NTT.

2.2.2 In July 2013, the Revs. A.J. Pol and E. Dethan attended the synod of the GGRI-NTT on behalf of the CanRC.

2.2.3 In July 2015, the Revs. A. Souman and E. Dethan met with the deputies of the GGRI-NTT. Several significant items were noted from this visit:

2.2.3.1 The GGRI-NTT has a seminary at Sumba. The CRCA has encouraged this non-accredited seminary to continue to pursue cooperation with the accredited STAKRI (Theological School in Kupang) which is supported by the church at Smithville.

2.2.3.2 The Reformed churches in The Netherlands (GKv) are reducing their financial support to the GGRI-NTT significantly and are planning to phase out all financial support by 2020. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) are increasing financial support in response and the GGRI-NTT is also requesting support from the CanRC.

2.2.3.3 There is some contact between the churches in the three geographical areas, Nusa Tenggara Timor (NTT), Kalimantan-Barat (KalBar), and Papua (formerly known as Irian Jaya). It is estimated that the GGRI-Papua consist of 50 churches, 40 mission posts, 16,412 members, 15 active ministers, and 65 evangelists. The GGRI-KalBar have 35 churches, 5878 members and a total of 35 active ministers and evangelists. The GGRI-NTT have a total of 75 churches and mission posts (of which 20 are instituted churches), and around 7,000 members. The GGRI-NTT shared with the CRCA some concerns that they have about the GGRI-Papua and GGRI-KalBar. These concerns will be discussed at the upcoming National Synod 2016.

2.2.3.4 There is no progress in the process of closer unity with the GGRC. Both the CRCA and the corresponding deputies of the FRCA have continued to encourage the GGRI-NTT and the GGRC to work together and seek ecclesiastical unity.

2.3 Glanbrook-Trinity notes that we have historical missionary ties with the KalBar and Papua parts of the GGRI, which have now federated with GGRI-NTT. They also note that the GGRI-NTT exists in a confusing ecclesiastical context, especially when considering its faltering relationship with the GGRC and the yet non-affiliated Smithville mission churches in Timor. Glanbrook-Trinity makes some suggestions for how to improve the familiarity with our sister-churches.

2.4 Flamborough supports the recommendations made by the committee.

2.5 Toronto-Bethel notes that the incomplete information and lack of familiarity with the complex inter-church relationships in Indonesia are hampering the development of our relationship with the GGRI. Toronto-Bethel pleads for the seminary in Sumba to remain as a viable option for the training for the ministry. Toronto-Bethel recommends that the committee engage and make use of the experience and relationships which the Rev. Versteeg has with the Indonesian churches.



2.6 The committee recommends:

- 2.6.1 To continue the relationship of EF with the GGRI-NTT under the adopted rules;
- 2.6.2 To mandate the CRCA:
 - 2.6.2.1 To discuss our rules for EF with the Committee on Relations of the GGRI and to gather as much information as is needed to come to a good recommendation to General Synod 2019 regarding a relationship of EF with the GGRI;
 - 2.6.2.2 To gather and evaluate information regarding the GGRI-KalBar and the GGRI-Papua in order to prepare a proposal as to how to deal with the GGRI as a national federation instead of dealing exclusively with the GGRI-NTT, which has become part of this larger federation of churches;
 - 2.6.2.3 To try to ensure that a delegation of two brothers is sent to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at a synod of the GGRI;
 - 2.6.2.4 To work in consultation and cooperation with the deputies of the FRCA to encourage and support the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in the Reformed doctrine and church polity;
 - 2.6.2.5 To encourage the GGRI to seek cooperation with the Reformed Theological School in Kupang (established by the Smithville CanRC);
 - 2.3.2.6 To encourage the GGRI to seek closer contact and cooperation with the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRC) and to monitor the progress of the dialogue between the GGRI and the GGRC.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CRCA has attempted to fulfill its mandate with regard to the GGRI-NTT.
- 3.2 Even though the GGRI-NTT has federated with the GGRI-Papua and GGRI-KalBar, it must be noted that we have incomplete information about the workings of the federation and the Reformed character of GGRI-Papua and GGRI-KalBar. We currently have EF only with the GGRI-NTT.
- 3.3 The recommendations from Toronto-Bethel have merit.
- 3.4 The suggestions of Glanbrook-Trinity to improve familiarity with our sister-churches could be beneficial to our CRCA.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT) under the adopted rules;
- 4.2. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.2.1 To discuss our rules for EF with the Committee on Relations of the GGRI and to gather as much information as is needed to come to a good recommendation to General Synod 2019 regarding a relationship of EF with the GGRI;
 - 4.2.2 To gather and evaluate information regarding the GGRI-KalBar and the GGRI-Papua in order to prepare a proposal as to how to deal with the GGRI as a national federation instead of dealing exclusively with the GGRI-NTT, which has become part of this larger federation of churches;
 - 4.2.3 To try to ensure that a delegation of two brothers is sent to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at a synod of the GGRI;

- 4.2.4 To work in consultation and cooperation with the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) to encourage and support the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in the Reformed doctrine and church polity;
 - 4.2.5 To encourage the GGRI to seek cooperation with the Reformed Theological School in Kupang (established by Smithville);
 - 4.2.6 To encourage the GGRI to seek closer contact and cooperation with the Calvinist Reformed Churches (GGRC) and to monitor the progress of the dialogue between the GGRI and the GGRC.
- 4.3 To pass on the letter of the Toronto-Bethel CanRC to the CRCA for consideration.

ADOPTED

Article 116 – GGRC (Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Glanbrook-Trinity (8.3.1.4), Flamborough (8.3.1.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 127) decided:
 - [4.1] At this time not to offer a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship to the GGRC, but to work toward that goal;
 - [4.2] To note with gratitude to the Lord that the work of the Canadian Reformed Churches has borne fruit, also in the reconciliation that could take place between the GGRC and the GGRM⁸;
 - [4.3] To mandate the CRCA:
 - [4.3.1] To continue contact with the GGRC to encourage these churches to be faithful to the Reformed doctrine and church order;
 - [4.3.2] When possible to send someone from or delegated by the CRCA to help and encourage these churches to grow in Reformed character, giving priority to finding out what obstacles the GGRC are experiencing in understanding and implementing the articles of the Reformed Church Order and how to help the GGRC to remedy the situation;
 - [4.3.3] To work in consultation and cooperation with the deputies of the FRCA, with the church of Smithville and the church of Edmonton-Immanuel, and, as much as possible and desirable, with other organizations involved in the work among the Reformed churches in the province of NTT;
 - [4.3.4] To encourage the GGRC to make use of the Reformed Theological School in Kupang (established by the church in Smithville) for the training for the ministry in their churches.
- 2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:
 - 2.2.1 The Rev. A. Souman visited the GGRC churches in July 2015. He visited with the deputies of the GGRC and received from them the Acts of their synods.

⁸ Reformed Pilgrim Churches.



- 2.2.2 Contact has been maintained with Smithville regarding the development of the missions in Indonesia. Smithville has contact with the GGRC but not with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT). This contact is relevant for the mission churches with regard to STAKRI (Reformed Theological School in Kupang). Neither GGRI-NTT nor the GGRC have shown much interest in cooperating with STAKRI which is supported by the Smithville CanRC.
- 2.2.3 “The present state of the GGRC leads the CRCA to the question how long we should continue pursuing a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRC. The GGRC came with this request to the Canadian Reformed Churches in 2001. Initially the Canadian Reformed Churches didn’t know the GGRC well enough and were not ready to accept this offer. Over time, however, the Canadian Reformed Churches got to know the GGRC quite well, but in the meantime several difficulties and divisions within the GGRC made the Canadian Reformed Churches reluctant to enter into such a relationship. This situation continues and over the past three years the CRCA has not seen much positive change in this situation”.
- 2.2.4. “Ministers are being ordained within the GGRC who did not come from STAKRI but from other seminaries in Indonesia. The way in which they were called and ordained is not in agreement with the intention of the Church Order. The GGRC do not send their students for the ministry to STAKRI, as they had committed to during their synod in 2011 and 2012. Also the unity with the GGRI-NTT is something that seems to disappear into the background more and more.”
- 2.3 Glanbrook-Trinity notes that the relationship that the GGRC has with the GGRI-NTT is faltering.
- 2.4 Flamborough supports the recommendations made by the committee.
- 2.5 The committee recommends:
- 2.5.1 At this time not to accept the offer of the GGRC to enter into a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship, but to work towards that goal;
- 2.5.2 To mandate the CRCA:
- 2.5.2.1 To continue contact with the GGRC to encourage these churches to be faithful to the Reformed doctrine and church order;
- 2.5.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC and the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA);
- 2.5.2.3 To encourage the GGRC to make use of the Reformed Theological School in Kupang (established by the Smithville CanRC) for the training for the ministry in their churches.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee is thanked for doing their work diligently.
- 3.2 From the report, it is clear that there are still too many unknowns. It would be premature to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the GGRC at this time.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 At this time not to accept the offer of the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRC) to enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);

4.2 To mandate the CRCA:

- 4.2.1 To continue contact with the GGRC to encourage these churches to be faithful to the Reformed doctrine and church order;
- 4.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC and the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA);
- 4.2.3 To encourage the GGRC to make use of the Reformed Theological School in Kupang (established by the Smithville CanRC) for the training for the ministry in their churches.

ADOPTED**Article 117 – DGK (The Reformed Churches [in The Netherlands])****1. Material**

- 1.1 Report from the Subcommittee Reformed churches in The Netherlands of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA-SRN) – section The Reformed Churches (Restored) (DGK)⁹ (8.2.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 190) mandated the committee:
 - [5.5.1] To monitor developments in the GKNvV [Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (temporary federation)]¹⁰ and RCR [the Reformed Churches Restored];
 - [5.5.2] To exhort all those who have left the RCN to reach out to others who love the Word and the Reformed faith;
 - [5.5.3] To inform the RCR that as long as they maintain EF with the LRCA [Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford], closer contact between the CanRC and RCR will be impossible;
 - [5.5.4] To work in consultation with the FRCA [Free Reformed Churches of Australia];
 - [5.5.5] To submit a comprehensive report of its activities to the churches six months prior to the next general synod.
- 2.2 From the report of the CRCA-SRN, we observe:
 - 2.2.1 The DGK is a federation of churches which came into being in 2003/2004 when the first groups of people left the GKv.
 - 2.2.2 The subcommittee had opportunity to meet deputies of the DGK.
 - 2.2.3 The DGK has a sister-church relationship with the LRCA. As long as this relationship is maintained closer contact with the CanRC and the DGK is impossible.
 - 2.2.4 It is important to maintain some form of contact with the DGK and continue to monitor the developments within this federation even though they have maintained the relationship with the LRCA.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee has fulfilled its mandate.
- 3.2 Synod agrees with Observation 2.2.4.

⁹ Now known as The Reformed Churches (DGK). Previously the acronym used was RCR.

¹⁰ Recently renamed the Reformed Churches The Netherlands. These churches themselves go by the acronym GKN.



4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To maintain contact with The Reformed Churches (DGK) and continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to the relationship between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA).

ADOPTED

Article 118 – GKNvv (Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (temporary federation))

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Subcommittee Reformed churches in The Netherlands of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA-SRN) section The Reformed Churches Netherlands (GKNvv)¹¹ (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (temporary federation) (GKNvv) including two appendices (8.3.1.1.20-22; see *Appendix 15*)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 190) mandated the committee:
 - [5.5.1] To monitor developments in the GKNvv [Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (temporary federation)] and RCR [the Reformed Churches Restored]¹²;
 - [5.5.2] To exhort all those who have left the RCN to reach out to others who love the Word and the Reformed faith;
 - [5.5.4] To work in consultation with the FRCA [Free Reformed Churches of Australia];
 - [5.5.5] To submit a comprehensive report of its activities to the churches six months prior to the next general synod.
- 2.2 From the report of the CRCA, we observe:
 - 2.2.1 The GKNvv is a small federation of churches that have left the GKv.
 - 2.2.2 The CRCA-SRN had opportunity to meet with deputies of the GKNvv.
 - 2.2.3 The subcommittee recommends further encouragement to seek unity with The Reformed Churches (DGK) and with concerned GKv members.
- 2.3 The letter of the GKNvv expresses sincere brotherly greetings to this synod. The GKNvv will keep the CanRC informed of the developments in their churches. The letter also indicates that first steps to a dialogue with the DGK have been taken.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Synod appreciates the contact which the CRCA-SRN had with the GKNvv.
- 3.2 Synod agrees with the recommendation to monitor the dialogue between the DGK and the GKNvv.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To maintain contact with the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKNvv) and continue to monitor developments within this federation.

ADOPTED

¹¹ Recently renamed the Reformed Churches The Netherlands. These churches themselves go by the acronym GKN.

¹² Now known as The Reformed Churches (DGK). Previously the acronym used was RCR.

Article 119 – Abbotsford Request regarding DGK**1. Material**

- 1.1 Letter from Abbotsford plus appendices (8.3.1.10)
- 1.2 Letter from the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad – Subcommittee Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CRCA-SRN) (8.3.1.11)
- 1.3 Letter from the Abbotsford CanRC (8.3.1.12)

2. Admissibility

- 2.1 Abbotsford's letter is admissible since it involves a request from a foreign church. Abbotsford was encouraged by Classis Pacific-East on February 25, 2016 to present this matter to synod.

3. Observations

- 3.1 Abbotsford has been asked by The Reformed Churches (DGK) to meet with a delegation of the Abbotsford church and the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA). Abbotsford intends to decline the request as (1) there is sufficient documentation for the DGK to work with; and (2) the issue is one that relates to the CanRC federation and not just the Abbotsford CanRC.
- 3.2 Abbotsford apologized to the CRCA-SRN for stating that the SRN had suggested to the DGK to speak with the Abbotsford CanRC.

4. Considerations

- 4.1 Synod agrees with the intention of Abbotsford for the reasons given in Obs. 3.1.
- 4.2 Synod agrees with GS 2013 that the Ecclesiastical Fellowship which The Reformed Churches (DGK) has with the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA) remains an impediment to closer contact.

5. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To consider the above consideration 4.1 as the answer to the letter of the Abbotsford CanRC.

ADOPTED**Article 120 – (FERC) First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore****1. Material**

- 1.1 Letter from the Hamilton-Providence CanRC including 4 appendices (8.3.1.2)

2. Observations

- 2.1 Hamilton-Providence requests Synod to mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to take up contact with the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC).
- 2.2 Hamilton-Providence has documented its contact with the FERC.
- 2.3 The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and the FERC are sister-churches since GS-FRCA 2015.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The FRCA are better situated to have a sister church relationship with the FERC due to geographic proximity. The CanRC can be kept informed about the FERC through the FRCA.
- 3.2 Synod rejoices that the FRCA could recognize the FERC as a faithful church. Synod is not convinced that it would be beneficial for the CanRC to have Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FERC because it is only one church.
- 3.3 Hamilton-Providence is free to continue its relationship with the FERC.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To deny the request of the Hamilton-Providence CanRC.

ADOPTED

Article 121 – ICRC (International Conference of Reformed Churches)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – section on the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the following CanRC: Abbotsford (8.3.1.1.13)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 167) mandated the committee:
 - [4.1] To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC);
 - [4.2] To send a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members to the next conference scheduled to meet in Cardiff, Wales, 2013.
- 2.2 From the report of the CRCA, we observe:
 - 2.2.1 The ICRC met in Cardiff, Wales from August 29 to September 4, 2013.
 - 2.2.2 The conference was an excellent opportunity to interact with and have meetings with delegates of a number of churches with which we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) and also with delegates of churches with which we do not.
 - 2.2.3 Amendments to the Constitution were suggested and need to be approved by the member churches before taking into effects. The suggested changes are:
 - 2.2.3.1 Article IV was expanded to indicate the origin of the ICRC to clarify the eligibility criteria for membership and to articulate more clearly the process for suspension or termination for membership.
 - 2.2.3.2 Article V was expanded to clarify the nature and extent of the ICRC's authority.
 - 2.2.3.3 Article VI was expanded to clarify the procedure by which the Constitution may be amended.
 - 2.2.4 In an effort to make the ICRC more meaningful to the member churches, the ICRC has continued to promote an increase in the number of regional conferences.
- 2.3 The CRCA recommends:
 - 2.3.1 To continue the membership of the CanRC in the ICRC;
 - 2.3.2 To approve the revised Constitution of the ICRC, as recommended;



- 2.3.3 To mandate the CRCA to delegate participants to relevant ICRC regional conferences;
- 2.3.4 To send a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members to the next ICRC, scheduled to meet in southern Ontario in 2017.
- 2.4 Abbotsford suggests that Synod reflect on the composition of the delegation to the next ICRC because the CanRC have several committees for inter-church relations.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 From their report, Synod concludes that the committee has fulfilled their mandate and expresses thankfulness for their work.
- 3.2 The proposed changes to the Constitution are an improvement and Synod agrees that they be adopted.
- 3.3 Abbotsford's suggestion makes sense. It would be good for the CRCA to communicate with the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) and Committee for Church Unity (CCU) when they consider delegation to ICRC events.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC);
- 4.2 To approve the revised Constitution of the ICRC, as recommended;
- 4.3 To mandate the CRCA to ensure an appropriate CanRC presence at ICRC events;
- 4.4 To send a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members to the next ICRC, scheduled to meet in southern Ontario in 2017, keeping in mind Cons. 3.3.

ADOPTED

The chairman spoke some words of farewell to the fraternal delegate of the Reformed Church of Quebec, the Rev. Bernard Westerveld. A housekeeping matter was also dealt with.

Article 122 – Appeals and letters re: GS 2013 Art. 124, 173 (SCBP Mandates)

Advisory Committee 4 presented its report. The report was discussed. During discussion the following amendments were moved and seconded:

Amendment 1

To remove

“seek”

From

“To instruct the SCBP to seek, receive, evaluate and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section to be compiled for possible submission to a future Synod.”

DEFEATED

Amendment 2

To replace

“4.1 That General Synod 2013 erred in directing the churches to propose changes to the hymn section of the Book of Praise by way of overtures to the minor assemblies instead of by the long-standing practice of directly addressing the SCBP.”



With

“4.1 To uphold the appeals and revert to the long-standing practice of having churches directly address the SCBP.”

ADOPTED

1. Material

- 1.1 Appeals from the following CanRC: Burlington-Fellowship (8.6.6.1), Toronto-Bethel (8.6.6.2), Hamilton-Blessings (8.6.9.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Glanbrook-Trinity (8.3.8.1), Cloverdale (8.3.8.2)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The appeals and letters deal with the general mandate of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) as well as with whether or not the SCBP should be given a renewed hymn mandate. Because these matters overlap, they can be dealt with together.
- 2.2 GS 2010 (Art. 142) gave the SCBP a mandate which included the following: “To instruct the SCBP to seek receive, evaluate and recommend additional hymns to be compiled and proposed at a future date for testing by the churches and for possible recommendation to a future Synod.” They considered that “the adopting of a definitive *Book of Praise* at this time does not exclude that more hymns may be submitted and examined by the SCBP and tested by the churches in a supplement and added in a future edition of the *Book of Praise*.”
- 2.3 The SCBP reported to GS 2013 that due to its heavy workload it was “unable to engage meaningfully with this part of its mandate.” The SCBP “wishes to stress that, once the 2013 edition of the *Book of Praise* is complete, it looks forward to be able to devote more time and energy on this part of the mandate in the future.”
- 2.4 In its report to GS 2013, the SCBP requested the following mandate with respect to the hymns:
 - 2.4.1 To instruct the SCBP to seek, receive, evaluate and recommend additional hymns to be compiled and proposed at a future date for testing by the churches and for possible recommendation to a future synod;
 - 2.4.2 To instruct the SCBP upon request to make available to churches the songs which have previously been reviewed.
- 2.5 GS 2013 (Art. 173) decided “not to renew the mandate of the SCBP given in Article 142 of Synod Burlington 2010 but to direct the churches which desire the addition of new hymns to take their proposals through the ecclesiastical route.”
- 2.6 GS 2013 (Art. 124) further decided “that all requests concerning factual errors, grammatical, typographical or other minor stylistic matters throughout the Book of Praise may be addressed by individuals or churches to the SCBP for its consideration and possible suggestion for change to a future synod. All requests concerning other changes to the contents of the *Book of Praise* (e.g. translation of confessions, changes to metrical psalms, rewording and rhyming of psalms and hymns, changes to liturgical forms) need to arise out of the churches in the ecclesiastical way, namely from classis to regional synod and general synod.”
- 2.7 In its report to GS 2016, the SCBP “requests that the mandate to receive, scrutinize and evaluate the contents of correspondence from the churches be continued and to report to the next General Synod as to the validity of the suggestions made.”

- 2.8 Toronto-Bethel considered that the SCBP has the expertise and experience necessary to deal with songs and music; that the churches have a committee for reviewing hymns (namely, the SCBP); and that the GS 2013 decision is premature since the SCBP did not complete the mandate of GS 2010. Toronto-Bethel recommends that GS 2016:
- 2.8.1 Reconsider Art. 173 of GS 2013;
 - 2.8.2 Direct the churches to submit their proposals for new hymns directly to the SCBP;
 - 2.8.3 Instruct the SCBP to seek, receive, evaluate and recommend additional hymns to be compiled and proposed at a future date for testing by the churches and for possible recommendation to a future Synod; and
 - 2.8.4 Instruct the SCBP to submit a report on its work to the next general synod.
- 2.9 Burlington-Fellowship and Hamilton-Blessings use similar grounds as Toronto-Bethel in appealing GS 2013 Art. 125. These churches ask GS 2016:
- 2.9.1 To judge that GS 2013 erred in directing churches to propose changes to the hymn section of the *Book of Praise* by way of overtures to the minor assemblies instead of by the long-standing practice of directly addressing the SCBP. As additional ground, the churches state that the matter of the *Book of Praise* belongs to the churches in common and that GS 2013 was wrong to direct the minor assemblies to deal with proposals concerning it;
 - 2.9.2 To mandate SCBP to work with the churches towards a new augment, expanding and revising the present hymn selection for review in the churches, and to include in this expansion a selection of traditional and contemporary hymns;
 - 2.9.3 To renew the mandate of GS 2007: “to also review the suitability of individual hymns that we already have in our *Book of Praise*, for possible change, deletion, or improvement.”
- 2.10 Cloverdale and Glanbrook-Trinity support a return to a mandate which allows churches to submit proposed changes to the *Book of Praise* directly to the SCBP.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The SCBP requested that the mandate to deal with correspondence from the churches be renewed and that they report to the next general synod as to the validity of suggestions made. Synod considers this to be a valid request.
- 3.2 Burlington-Fellowship and Hamilton-Blessings correctly point out that the mandate given to the SCBP by GS 2010 was the same as the mandate given by GS 2001 and subsequent synods. Toronto-Bethel is correct in pointing out that the SCBP in 2013 asked to have this mandate renewed, and indicated its desire to take up this as yet unfulfilled part of their mandate from 2010. GS 2010 considered that the completion of the new edition of the *Book of Praise* doesn't necessarily exclude continuing to search for additional hymns.
- 3.3 The contents of the *Book of Praise* are indeed a matter of the churches in common (CO 30, 55). Because of this, the SCBP has been appointed to deal with matters relating to the *Book of Praise*. Therefore, any proposals to change the hymn section of the Book of Praise should be considered by the SCBP. Before any such proposals are adopted, they would need to be approved by a general synod. This assembly would decide what will be changed, and when any changes will be implemented.
- 3.4 Historically, the SCBP has been mandated to involve the churches in submitting, testing and evaluating any proposed changes to the hymn section. Churches will have ample

opportunity to express their desires and opinions regarding any modifications, additions or deletions, as well as when they would be printed in the *Book of Praise*.

- 3.5 Members of the SCBP are selected on the basis of some expertise in music, liturgy, theology and language and thus are best suited to review and recommend proposed additional hymns.
- 3.6 The churches that submitted appeals are correct in pointing out that time and energy will be spent receiving and reviewing hymns regardless of which route is followed. Synod considers that it is a more efficient use of time to have the SCBP deal with these matters.
- 3.7 Burlington-Fellowship's request to mandate the SCBP to work towards a new augment goes beyond the appeal as it introduces a new element into the mandate.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To uphold the appeals and revert to the long-standing practice of having churches directly address the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP).
- 4.2 To include in the mandate of the SCBP (see GS 2016 Art. 127):
 - 4.2.1 To receive, scrutinize and evaluate the contents of correspondence from the churches and report to the next General Synod as to the validity of the suggestions made.
 - 4.2.2 To instruct the SCBP to seek, receive, evaluate and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section to be compiled for possible submission to a future Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 123 – Appeal of Burlington-Rehoboth re: GS 2013 Art. 125

1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal from the Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC (8.6.3.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 125) adopted the suggestion of the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* to change the word “engrafted” to “incorporated” in CO 59, to line up with the change adopted by GS 2007 (Art. 172) to replace the word “engrafted” with “incorporated” in HC LD 27 Q&A 74.
- 2.2 When the SCBP recommended to GS 2007 (Art. 172 Obs. 2.2.1) that “engrafted” be changed to “incorporated” in HC LD 27 Q&A 74, it explained that “incorporated” was a better translation of the original German text. It further opined that “incorporated” better reflects the fact that covenant children are from the beginning members of the church, and their baptism “registers” them as members.
- 2.3 Burlington-Rehoboth observes that CO 59 deals with the baptism of adults, not of children. This church argues that the baptism of adults serves to symbolize a radical change in their status: before, they existed outside of Christ, but by faith, they have been grafted into Christ. The claim is made that the Form for the Baptism of Adults (*Book of Praise*, p. 599) provides clear descriptions of the change that has taken place: they were children of wrath, living a life of sinfulness, but, having sincerely repented, and come to



faith in Christ, they have become members of Christ. This change is reflected especially in the third question of the Public Profession of Faith, which asks, “Do you...confess...that you have become a member of Jesus Christ and his church?”

- 2.4 Burlington-Rehoboth considers, therefore, that the argument for changing the wording of HC LD 27 Q&A 74 does not apply to CO 59. In the case of an adult, who by faith becomes a member of Christ, “engrafted” more accurately reflects the change that has taken place in his or her status.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Burlington-Rehoboth is correct in pointing out that GS 2013 decided to change the wording of CO 59 to line it up with the wording of HC LD 27 Q&A 74 and supported its decision with a reference to GS 2007 Art. 172.
- 3.2 There is one baptism (Ephesians 4:5). Our confessions do not distinguish between the meaning of baptism as it is applied to infant children of believers or to adults who have come to faith in Christ.
- 3.3 There is very little difference between the meanings of the words “engrafted” and “incorporated.” These words are so close in meaning as to be interchangeable.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To deny the appeal of the Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC.

ADOPTED

Article 124 – Closing Devotions and Adjournment

The Rev. D. de Boer read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, led in prayer, and asked those present to sing Psalm 90:1,8.

Synod was adjourned to reconvene Thursday morning at 9:30 am.

Day 8 — Morning Session Thursday, May 19, 2016

Article 125 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Acts 2:37-47, spoke some words, led in prayer, and asked those present to sing Hymn 28:1,6,7. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.

Article 126 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 127 – SCBP (Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) (8.2.9)
- 1.2 Supplementary Report of the SCBP (8.2.9.1)

- 1.3 Letters from the following CanRC: Abbotsford (8.3.8.3), Toronto-Bethel (8.3.8.4), Tintern-Spring Creek (8.3.8.5), Lynden-Vineyard (8.3.8.6), Winnipeg-Redeemer (8.3.8.7)

2. Admissibility

- 2.1 Synod judges that the Supplementary Report of the SCBP is inadmissible. Committees appointed by General Synod need to report six months prior to Synod and this report was received by the churches in early March, 2016. No valid reason was given for the lateness of this report. Sagacity suggests that the letters from Tintern-Spring Creek, Lynden and Winnipeg-Redeemer dealing with the Supplementary Report are therefore superfluous.

3. Observations

- 3.1 The SCBP completed the mandate given it by GS 2013. The Committee has implemented the instructions GS 2013 with regard to the psalms, hymns, and prose sections, and published the 2014 *Book of Praise*. As churches we may express thankfulness to the Lord that after thirty years we may receive a revised version of the *Book of Praise*.
- 3.2 The SCBP requested the privilege of the floor at GS 2016 in order to formally present the 2014 *Book of Praise*. Abbotsford wondered what the purpose of such a presentation would be, especially since other committees are not given the same opportunity. In view of the scale of the contribution made by the SCBP, Synod granted this request (see GS 2016 Art. 98).
- 3.3 The SCBP reports that it has published four different editions of the *Book of Praise*. These include faux-leather cover, hard cover, coil-bound, and digital editions. The church at Abbotsford wonders if a pocket-sized version of the *Book of Praise* could also be printed.
- 3.4 The SCBP reports that it operates under a contractual relationship with Premier Printing Ltd (Manitoba). This contract expires on February 28, 2017. The committee seeks approval from Synod to negotiate the continuation of this contract for an additional five years.
- 3.5 The SCBP reports that it has printed 29,393 copies of the *Book of Praise* in 2014 and 2015. As of September 2015, 20,766 printed copies have been sold, along with 3,054 digital editions.
- 3.6 The SCBP notes with gratitude many expressions of interest in our *Book of Praise*. It has responded to various requests for information and dealt with a number of requests to copy, in whole or in part, the Psalms and Hymns as well as other parts of the *Book of Praise*. It has overhauled its website (www.bookofpraise.ca) to function as a better tool for promotion and awareness. The website now includes a Resource section which contains links to recommended harmonisations for all of the psalms and hymns (composed by br. Dennis Teitsma). These harmonisations are offered in digital form free of charge.
- 3.7 The SCBP extended aid to the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) by answering practical questions pertaining to the potential publication of their own *Book of Praise*. They request Synod to mandate them to maintain contact with our Australian sister-churches to assist them in this matter.

- 3.8 The SCBP reports that it has maintained its corporate status and has filed annual income tax forms with Revenue Canada. It requests Synod to mandate it to maintain its corporate status in order to protect the interests of the CanRC in matters concerning the *Book of Praise*.
- 3.9 The SCBP notes that br. C.J. Nobels was promoted to glory on April 18, 2015. This brother has been a member of the committee for many years and was instrumental in the process of producing the current edition of the *Book of Praise*.
- 3.10 The SCBP notes that the Rev. G.Ph. van Popta has completed his term on this committee.
- 3.11 The SCBP recommends that Synod appoint br. M. Jongsma for three 3-year terms and the Rev. D. Wynia as convener in the place of the Rev. G. Ph. VanPopta.
- 3.12 The SCBP reported on two corrections made as a result of proofreading.
- 3.12.1 In the table of cross-references to the Three Forms of Unity, some cross-references relating to LD 35 were added/modified.
- 3.12.2 In HC LD 40 Q&A105, the Matthew 26:52 footnote was moved from footnote 3 to footnote 4.
- 3.13 The SCBP reports that a number of experts provided advice in specific areas. It acknowledges with appreciation the contributions of the following: Dr. W. Helder, Mr. F. Ezinga, Mr. M. Jongsma, Dr. K. Dieleman, Dr. B. Faber, Dr. J. VanVliet, Dr. G.H. Visscher and the Rev. C. Bosch.
- 3.14 Abbotsford requests clarity on the copyright of the 2014 *Book of Praise*. It asks the following questions:
- What is strictly copyrighted? Is it the entire book or some portions of it?
 - Are churches permitted to reproduce the prose section?
 - Can churches put a copy of the *Book of Praise* on their website?
- 3.15 Toronto-Bethel requests Synod to mandate the SCBP to monitor the development of the joint song book being developed by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) and when possible, provide the churches with a sense of this new song book's composition, quality, and theological accuracy.

4. Considerations

- 4.1 Synod approves of the changes made by the SCBP to the psalm, hymn and prose sections of the *Book of Praise* subsequent to GS 2013.
- 4.2 There has been a good relationship between our churches and Premier Printing for many years. There is no reason not to renew the contract with this company.
- 4.3 The committee is to be commended for updating their website.
- 4.4 The rationale for the corrections made as a result of proofreading was convincing.
- 4.5 Abbotsford is directed to the SCBP to obtain answers to their questions re: copyright and whether or not a pocket-sized version is feasible.
- 4.6 Toronto-Bethel's suggestion is a good one, since use of a joint OPC-URCNA songbook is a significant development that could have implications for our unity talks with the URCNA.
- 4.7 Synod's desire is to make the *Book of Praise* available in an unrestricted way. However, Synod also recognizes that copyright laws restrict us in this regard.



5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To thank the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) for the tremendous amount of work in preparing the 2014 *Book of Praise* for publication.
- 5.2 To thank sr. Caroline Nobels for the work that her late husband br. C. Nobels performed as a member of the Committee.
- 5.3 To thank the Rev. G.Ph. van Popta for his work as a member of the Committee.
- 5.4 To thank br. D. Teitsma for his work in making harmonisations of the psalms and hymns available.
- 5.5 To authorize the Committee to negotiate the continuation of a contract with Premier Printing Ltd for an additional five years, with an expiry date of February 28, 2022, and, within the bounds of copyright laws, make as much of the *Book of Praise* as possible available on the CanRC website.
- 5.6 To give the SCBP the following mandate:
 - 5.6.1 To foster an increased awareness of the *Book of Praise* among others in the English-speaking world;
 - 5.6.2 To maintain contact with our Australian sister-churches to assist them in the possible publication of their own *Book of Praise*;
 - 5.6.3 To maintain its corporate status in order to protect the interest of the Canadian Reformed Churches in matters concerning the *Book of Praise*;
 - 5.6.4 To communicate with the churches regarding copyright issues concerning the *Book of Praise*;
 - 5.6.5 To maintain its archives and website;
 - 5.6.6 To monitor the development of a joint OPC-URCNA songbook and when possible to provide the churches with a sense of this new song book's composition, quality, and theological accuracy;
 - 5.6.7 To receive, scrutinize and evaluate the contents of correspondence from the churches and to report to the next General Synod as to the validity of the suggestions made (as per GS 2016 Art. 122);
 - 5.6.8 To seek, receive, evaluate and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section to be compiled for possible submission to a future Synod (as per GS 2016 Art. 122).

ADOPTED

Article 128 – Appeal of Burlington-Fellowship re: GS 2013 Art. 128

1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal from the Burlington-Fellowship CanRC (8.6.5.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2010 Art. 177 Rec. 4 states, “That Synod decide to sustain the appeal of Burlington-Fellowship against Article 10, Appeal 1, Ground c of Regional Synod East 2008” was defeated.
 - 2.1.1 RSE 2008 Art. 10 Appeal 1 Ground C reads, “Broader assemblies have determined that the issue of women’s voting is a matter of the churches in common and a

- number of General Synods have admitted the issue to their agendas, evidencing the same.”
- 2.2 The chairman ruled on the floor of GS 2010 “that by the fact that the Advisory Committee report was defeated, the appeal was denied.”
- 2.3 Burlington-Fellowship submitted its denied appeal to GS 2013 asking that GS 2013:
- [1.] Judge that Synod Burlington 2010 (Art. 177) erred when it denied Burlington-Fellowship’s appeal without providing observations, considerations, nor adopting a recommendation;
 - [2.] Judge that Synod Burlington 2010 failed to do justice to the appeal of Burlington-Fellowship in the manner in which it disposed of the appeal;
 - [3.] Accept the re-submission of Burlington-Fellowship’s Appeal of 2010 (attached to its letter) for judgment in 2013 on the basis of Article 31 of the Church Order, unencumbered by Article 33.
- 2.4 GS 2013 in Art. 128 adopted a two-part decision as follows:
- [4.1.] That Burlington Synod 2010 (Article 177) erred when it denied Burlington-Fellowship’s appeal without providing observations, considerations, nor adopting a recommendation;
 - [4.2.] That Synod Burlington 2010 failed to do justice to the appeal of Burlington-Fellowship;
 - [4.3.] To declare the resubmission of Burlington-Fellowship’s appeal against Article 10 in the Acts of Regional Synod East 2008 admissible.
- and
- [3.1.] That Regional Synod East 2008 was correct in stating that “broader assemblies have determined that the issue of women’s voting is a matter of the churches in common”;
 - [3.2.] To deny the appeal of Burlington-Fellowship.
- 2.5 Burlington-Fellowship appeals a number of considerations of GS 2013 Art. 128 as follows:
- 2.5.1 That GS 2013 wronged Burlington-Fellowship by giving weight to a defeated motion (Cons. 2.3);
 - 2.5.2 That GS 2013 wronged Burlington-Fellowship by not giving examples to support its claim that past synods have made binding decision beyond those regulated by the Church Order (Cons. 2.5);
 - 2.5.3 That GS 2013 wronged Burlington-Fellowship when on the one hand it judged the idea that women’s voting was a matter for the churches in common while on the other hand in a prior decision it concluded that no such decision had ever been made and that this was simply a commonly accepted practice (GS 2013 Art. 110, Cons. 2.2);
 - 2.5.4 That GS 2013 wronged Burlington-Fellowship when it used a previously held position of Burlington-Fellowship as part of its considerations (Cons. 2.4).

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Defeated motions have no weight.
- 3.2 While it would have been helpful if GS 2013 had given examples to substantiate its claims, the provision of such examples is not required.
- 3.3 The stated contradiction identified by Burlington-Fellowship does appear to be present in the acts of GS 2013.

- 3.4 GS 2013 was wrong to judge Burlington-Fellowship's appeal using as a consideration their previously held position.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 That Synod decide to send the above considerations as an answer to the appeal of Burlington-Fellowship.

ADOPTED

Article 129 – Synod Guidelines

1. Material

- 1.1 Letter from the Dunnville CanRC organizing committee (5.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The organizing committee of the Dunnville CanRC brings the following to the attention of Synod:

- 2.1.1 “All electronically submitted documents to Synod should include a file name that makes it distinguishable e.g. The file name of the document should include the name of the submitting church and the topic of the submission. As an example a letter would have been easier to organize with a filename like Langley Letter to Synod 2016 re CWeb

Rationale: Many submitted documents simply name the topic which makes it difficult to properly file and organize especially when there are several churches submitting on the same topic.”

- 2.1.2 “We would discourage the use of spiral bound or comb bound paper copies of a submission.

Rationale: The five paper copies are placed in binders. Removing the sheets from a bound submission creates significant additional work. Duo-Tang or similar type paper folders made of cardstock paper or 3 ring binders are preferred.”

- 2.1.3 “We recommend that if a submission is 15 pages or less no hard copy will be required.

Rationale: It is much easier and cost effective to print the hard copies from an email than to receive the documents, which often are folded papers, in an envelope. Subsequently trying to insert folded papers into a binder is cumbersome and unwieldy.”

- 2.1.4 “If submissions are scanned copies it is highly recommended that submissions dealing with separate topics be scanned as separate documents.

Rationale: To separate topics that have all been lumped into one scan creates extra unnecessary work.”

- 2.1.5 “All scanned submissions should be in .pdf, .doc. or .docx. file format.

Rationale: Some scanned copies were in formats that needed to be converted from photo and other picture formats. This creates extra unnecessary work.”

- 2.1.6 “Proper electronic signatures will be accepted as a suitable means of verifying the authenticity of a submission.

Rationale: A proper electronic signature created with a trustworthy software program designed with the capabilities to create a verifiable signature will diminish the need for scanned copies.”

- 2.1.7 “If at all possible and feasible submitters should stick to one topic in each of their submissions.

Rationale: We received submissions that covered more than one topic making it difficult to file and find an appropriate placement on the agenda.”

- 2.2 Synod Guideline J reads, “These Synodical Guidelines may be suspended, amended, revised or abrogated by a majority vote of Synod.”

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The experience of the organizing committee of Dunnville should not be lost. It has done well to bring this to the attention of the Synod.
- 3.2 The current officers of synod are best placed to judge how to implement the desires of this Synod with respect to these observations.
- 3.3 It is not clear why hard copies are needed, other than for archiving purposes. Hence it makes little sense to set a limit on the size of submissions as they would not require printing beforehand.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To mandate the officers of this Synod to take the necessary measures to have these suggestions acted upon.

ADOPTED

Article 130 - Concluding Matters

Censure as per CO 34

The chairman stated, with thankfulness to the Lord, that censure as per CO 34 was not needed. Instead, he gave thanks that a good spirit of cooperation was evidenced throughout Synod. Opportunity was given to the members of Synod to speak on this matter but no one availed themselves of the opportunity.

Publication of the Acts

The first and second clerks are responsible for preparing the Acts of GS 2016 for publication. Synod allowed an official version of the acts to be made available on the website as soon as available. Two copies of the confidential Acts will be sent to each church.

Financial Matters

Synod members were reminded of the reimbursement rate for loss of income. No additional financial matters were reported.

Preparation of Next General Synod

The Edmonton-Immanuel CanRC had already been appointed as convening church for GS 2019 (GS 2016 Art. 113.19). GS 2019 will be convened in the month of May.

Adoption of the Final Articles of the Acts

Members of Synod were requested to review the Acts received and to forward any further corrections to the clerk. The executive members of Synod will review and adopt the final articles of the Acts.

Approval of Press Release

The press release will be prepared by the vice-chairman and approved by the executive members of Synod for publication.

Article 131 - Close of GS 2016

On behalf of the members of GS 2016, the vice-chairman expressed sincere gratitude to the Rev. R. Aasman, who served so capably as chairman to make this the shortest synod of the CanRC in recent times.

The chairman then proceeded to speak some closing remarks. He first of all gave thanks to God for making this happen. He expressed gratitude for services of the Dunnville congregation.

Br. B. Meerstra briefly outlined how far Dunnville went in providing hospitality, even modifying lodging to cater to the needs of the Meerstra family.

Upon invitation of the chairman, the vice-chairman, on behalf of Synod, explained the host church would receive a large custom-made clock, with the inscription, “With deep gratitude from Synod Dunnville 2016.”

In turn, br. Cornell Feenstra (of Dunnville’s Organizing Committee for Synod) presented the Rev. Aasman with a gavel and base, handcrafted by a member of the congregation, as a token of appreciation for his work as chairman.

The chairman reflected on some of the agenda items, noting matters of sadness and joy.

His speech can be found in *Appendix 15*.

The Rev. R. Aasman read Psalm 118:17-29, gave a brief meditation, led in prayer, and asked those present to sing Hymn 85:1,2.

Since the *agenda* had become the *acta*,
the chairman declared GS 2016
closed.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – Opening Address by the Rev. John VanWoudenberg

Esteemed brothers, on behalf of Dunnville Canadian Reformed Church I extend to you a warm welcome.

As congregation we feel honoured to host General Synod 2016. We are a young church: we were instituted in 2003 and thus are “just a young teenager.” We are young also in our demographic composition as congregation: many young people move here to start out their married lives together. We are starting to push the 500-member mark. In 2010 we were blessed with a new building—and are thankful that we can make this facility available for Synod 2016. As a young and blessed congregation we welcome you!

Let’s turn to God’s Word in Php. 2:1-8.

Brothers, here we are ready to go. Some time ago we were each honoured by being appointed to serve at General Synod 2016.

Allow me to highlight Php. 2:5: *“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”* Paul says this with a note of excitement. Something just grabs Paul: “Philippians, this is it!”

The congregation at Philippi was a nice congregation that gave Paul much joy. Yet there were a number of concerns, particularly about how the members related with each other. There were problems in the communion of saints. Think of the mention of Syntyche and Euodia in Php. 4:2, *“I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.”*

Paul addresses this: vs. 2-3, ² *“Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”* ³ *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”* Instead of leaving it at that and moving on to a new topic, Paul gets excited: “[Philippians], *have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...*” Paul then speaks those well-known verses that follow.

I am not going to give you a detailed exposition of these verses, but I am going to ask you to ponder them with me.

Our Saviour, before coming to this earth, *“was in the form of God.”* Not only was he God, but at that time he also “appeared to be God.” In other words, he, in perfect harmony with the Father and the Spirit, set the agenda for how things went. In the words of Ps. 115, he did whatever he pleased—and everyone and everything bowed down to him.

But lo and behold: *“he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped”!* Wording that in the positive, “he was willing to let that go!” He was willing to let go of that mode of operating that rightfully belonged to him as the Sovereign God! He was willing to relinquish control! He was willing to let go of having others serve him—and instead to put these others before him and his agenda and his will. He was willing to serve them!

As such, he *“emptied himself”!* He took on *“the form of a servant.”* He took on that form of having someone else determine his paths! As he himself said while walking on earth, *“The Son of Man came, not to be served, but to serve.”*

He came to serve a people under the wrath of God. He thus bore God's holy wrath against their sins. As such "*he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*"!

The cross was horrible! It was excruciating! It was most shameful! He was willing even to endure the horrible wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race!

Not that he was forced to do so! At each step he could have walked away. But he did not! Rather, he continually said to himself, "I have come to serve—and that is what I will do."

What attitude!—and that in a good, moving, and most profound sense!

Fellow delegates, ponder for a moment this attitude with me. In the words of a well-known hymn, "I can scarce take it in."

That attitude is what grabs Paul! "O Philippians, that is the attitude! "*Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.*"

No, not "the same mind as each other"—whether in the congregation of Philippi or at a general synod. To always have the same opinion is not always good. In fact, "iron sharpens iron." It is good to have different viewpoints and debate them. Synods are even meant to be deliberative in character.

Rather, "have the same mind or mindset or approach or attitude as Christ!" Have the mindset of serving—serving the Lord and serving for the benefit of each other. Don't let your pride or any sense of entitlement or any flavour of "showing your stuff" get in the way.

That mindset "is ours in Christ!" Our Lord has gained this mindset for us. He works in us with his Spirit to give us that mindset. We can pray for it— and he will hear us.

More than that, this mindset is also the way of blessing, whether for ourselves personally, for the churches, or for the world. To see that, ponder again our Saviour. What happened when he served in that way? In the words of vs. 9, "*Therefore God has highly exalted him...*"

Fellow delegates: ponder—ponder deeply—and let's seek to serve!

APPENDIX 2 – GGRI-NTT: Letter of Greeting from the Rev. Pila Njuka of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT)

Esteemed Brothers,

First of all, we praise our Lord and God who has made us His covenant children, and therefore, we are brothers and sisters in the Lord. We express our heartfelt gratitude for inviting us to attend your general synod which will be opened on May 10, 2016. The invitation is a proof that we are sister churches. It is a privilege for us to be invited to your synod. By way of this letter, we apologize to you brothers because we are unable to attend your respected synod. As sister churches we should visit each other, but because we are unable to fund our trip, we cannot be in your midst now.

Even though we are not present at the synod personally, through this letter allow us to wish you the Lord's blessing for the synod. We hope and pray that the Head of the church may guide and bless you as you discuss and decide all the matters on the agenda of the synod. May the Lord bless you with wisdom from above for the benefit of the Canadian Reformed Churches and also your sister churches around the world.

Finally, we commend you to our Lord and God who will guide and keep you at your synod. May the Lord bless you.

Yours in Christ.



APPENDIX 3 – RCNZ: Letter of Greeting from the Rev. Pieter van der Wel of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand

Dear brothers,

Re: Fraternal delegate to General Synod Canadian Reformed Churches

Further to our earlier correspondence about this I regret to inform you that for health reasons Rev. de Vos is now unable to undertake the journey to the U.S.A. and Canada which he had planned. Therefore he is not able to attend your General Synod, starting on 10th May 2016, as we had hoped.

We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience this may cause and we certainly regret that we are not able to participate in your synod as we had planned and looked forward to.

May the Lord bless you as you meet in your synod and uphold you in your deliberations.

APPENDIX 4 – FRCA: Address by br. Peter Witten of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Esteemed Brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ,

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, it is our special privilege to extend to you, warm greetings from Australia. The Lord, the shepherd of our lives, the head of the church, stirs within us a true brotherly love for you! We are thrilled to be here. My fellow delegate, Rev. Stephen ‘t Hart and I thank you for this opportunity! Australia may seem like a faraway distant land, but, within the unity of true faith, we are your nearby neighbour. Thank you for your kind friendship and generous hospitality.

Thank you, also, for sending Brs. Otto Bouwman and Jake vanLaar, as your delegates to our most recent Synod, held last year at the Free Reformed Church of Baldivis. It was good to welcome these brothers, and to receive their input into our discussions. We enjoyed hearing news from Canada, and this face-to-face interaction not only helps to promote a deeper understanding of your church situation, but it also helps to avoid potential misunderstandings. It serves to strengthen the harmonious relationship that exists between our two church federations. We hope that you too, will also accept our invitation to send delegates to our next synod to be held, the Lord willing, in 2018, in the beautiful coastal city of Bunbury, WA. Your input on such synod matters as; the review of Bible translations, inter-church relations, the training of young men for the ministry, and, what we in Australia still refer to as, ‘the Book of Praise’, is considered as truly supportive.

Bible Translations

Work dealing with the review of Bible translations continues to be a matter of great importance at our synods. We are concerned about the possible use of the NIV 2011, within the public worship services. The danger of egalitarianism within the NIV 2011 is worrisome. And this danger, as also highlighted in your Committee for Bible Translations’ report to this synod, caused Synod Baldivis to phase out the use of the NIV 1984, by July 2018. Synod Baldivis stated the following; “The continued use of the NIV 1984 may cause confusion, and, inadvertently, lead to the 2011 version being used in error.” Synod Baldivis also reviewed and has thus recommended, the English Standard Version as a trustworthy bible translation, opening the way for its use within the public worship services. Thankful use was made of the report on the ESV to your last synod.

Church Relations

In the full acknowledgement of the Lord’s providence and blessings, we share with you news regarding our church relations. Australia has a new sister church in Singapore. The First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore is a congregation of some 307 members. Their pastor is Chong, Nam Tuck, he is someone you might remember as a former CRTS student in Hamilton. In the midst of past doctrinal struggles, the Lord has preserved this church. It is a single church federation, located not that far from the coast of WA. The First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, which is known to you, through the work of Rev. Berends, Van Spronsen, Dr. Van Dam and Dr. Visscher and other Canadians who have travelled to Singapore, is also busy with bringing God’s word to the country of Malaysia. We rejoice that the Lord is gathering his church in a part of the world, that is heavily dominated by the religion of Islam.



Similarly, with much joy we share that a new sister church relationship has been extended to the Reformed Church of New Zealand. Following many years of dialogue, progress towards a sister church relationship was made possible, when the barrier of the sister church relationship between them and the Christian Reformed Church of Australia was discontinued. Through the ‘rules for sister church relations’ our deputies will seek to encourage and support our brothers and sisters in New Zealand.

Whilst the joy of having two new sister church relations brings much happiness, the same cannot be said in regards to our relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Deep sorrow is felt with the decision to suspend this sister church relationship, resulting in the loss of certain sister church privileges. What were previously open pulpits and an open Lord’s Supper table for the visiting RCN ministers, brothers and sisters, has now become a situation of careful review and restrictions. The ongoing toleration of Scriptural and Confessional deviation has threatened what was once a beautiful sister church relation. We know that you too, brothers, are saddened by these concerns. May the Lord hear our prayers for His grace to awaken new faithfulness within the RCN. We cherish the expectation that together we may be united in our call for these churches to repent.

This time of sadness can also provide cause for serious reflection for our own churches and church federations. Are we being influenced by the trends and philosophy of the world around us? Are we compromising the gospel message to remove the rock of offense? Are we pushing the envelope of our confessions or stretching the boundaries of the church order to be seen as more relevant to our culture and palatable to our members? The prayer for greater faithfulness in the RCN (lib) requires that we too, are ever watchful for the attacks of the evil one in the life and doctrine of our church members.

Mentioning a prayer for greater faithfulness, then also ties into news regarding the De Gereformeerde Kerken (formerly called the RCN restored) and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Deputies have asked, “Will these churches continue to grow? And, will the Lord bless them as they struggle to find each other?” In Australia, the discussions with the DGK and GKN are welcomed, although we have no formal relationship with them. Since 2006, a delegate from the DGK has attended our synods in Australia, and they continue to receive the opportunity to address our Synods and deputies about their church situation.

Australia has maintained sister church relations with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, and the Reformed Church of Indonesia (GGRI). Support is given for the work of the Theological Seminary in Sumba. Synod Baldivis also requested the church of Mundijong to make their minister available for lectures at the seminary. And, like you, Australia has continued to encourage greater unity talks between the GGRI and Calvin Reformed Church (GGRC). Synod Baldivis suggested that a possible time frame be sought towards the goal of federal unity between these two church federations in Indonesia.

In 2014, shortly following Synod Carman, our deputies received a letter of introduction from the United Reformed Church of North America. This letter did not surprise us, as our delegates had also spoken with the URCNA delegates during Synod Carman. Likewise, we were aware of the Ecclesiastical Fellowship which exists between you and the URCNA. In response to URCNA’s letter of introduction, Synod Baldivis has mandated our deputies to provide the URCNA with information about our churches, to take up contact with the URCNA and to report to the next Synod. We do welcome this opportunity and look forward to meeting the URCNA delegates.



Theological Seminary

In regards to theological training of young Australian brothers, you might ask this question. What was Synod Baldivis doing when it commissioned its deputies to survey the FRCA churches regarding the desirability of establishing an Australian Seminary?

In order to address that question, we ought first to say that Australians still treasure the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary! And, we still consider it, ‘our seminary.’ We are very aware of the rich blessings that Australia enjoys through the work of the CRTS. Many of our ministers are CRTS graduates! Our support for the seminary remains ever so strong! Therefore, Synod Baldivis also decided to increase and match your annual per communicant member contribution for the CRTS, to \$82.00. Further, we have also understood and have accepted the Board of Governors’ decision to not endorse a remote Australian training program for first year students in Australia. Finally, each time that a CRTS professor visits Australia, we as churches feel truly connected to the CRTS and enriched by their in-depth Scriptural knowledge!

At the same time, with a desire to follow the instruction of Art 19 of the Church Order, which highlights the call to maintain an institution for the training of the ministry, we do not restrain discussions about working towards an Australian Theological Seminary. Such discussions are stimulating and acknowledge a wonderful zeal in the promotion of the ministry, particularly in encouraging young men to pursue this special calling. Indeed, it may be possible that in the future, unfavourable government policies and a restriction on the opportunity to travel overseas, could result in the disruption of our current situation. However, whatever the future might hold, please be assured that our theological seminary discussions will be held in cooperation with the CRTS. Again, please note our gratitude to you and our thankfulness to the Lord’s for the work of the CRTS!

Book of Praise

Work in regards to an Australian Book of Praise has also continued to receive our attention. And, once again, the ties with you here in Canada are strong. We thank you for mandating your Standing Committee for the Book of Praise deputies “to continue contact with the Australian Deputies for the Book of Praise in order to assist the FRCA’s pursuit of a possible Australian version of the Book of Praise.” We too, have mandated our Book of Praise Deputies to seek your guiding assistance. We realise that the adoption of a common Book of Praise is a labour intensive process, requiring much wisdom and perseverance. Currently, we are in what could be described as a ‘transitional’ Book of Praise stage. Synod Baldivis has encouraged the churches to use the 2014 Canadian Psalter Hymnal for the interim, as we seek to adapt your Book of Praise into an Australia Book of Praise!

Concluding Remarks

Brothers, no Australian greeting should conclude, nor would seem complete, without some comment regarding the emigrational patterns that exists between our two church federations. We happily share with you that several young Australian brothers have expressed an interest in coming to Canada in order to take up their studies at the CRTS. Two of them will, the Lord willing soon arrive in Hamilton. And, we can tell you, that our joy in this matter is quite influenced by those ministers who have decided to immigrate to Australia. The churches of Launceston and Mt. Nasura have joyfully welcomed their new pastors, Dr. Wes Bredenhof and Dr. Reuben Bredenhof. In 2014, Rev. Dirk Poppe accepted the call to serve in the Free Reformed



Church of Southern River. The Lord willing, we look forward to the safe arrival of Candidate David Winkel and his family for the church of Bunbury. And, Rev. Anton Souman, from the church at Willoughby Heights for the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott. And, just a few weeks ago, we thanked the Lord, in guiding Rev. Ryan deJonge to accept the call extended to him by the Church of Armadale, for mission work in Lae, PNG.

In all of these things, brothers, we see evidence of the Lord's care for his church in Australia. And, we see the rich blessings of a sister church relationship that is alive and well. We thus then, also pray that the Lord will continue to be with you and that he will continue to bless the Canadian Reformed Churches. May he grant you the strength and wisdom needed to complete the work of this synod. All praise and glory belong to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX 5 – OPC: Address by br. Mark Bube of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Mr. Moderator, Fathers and Brothers, Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

It is my sincere pleasure to bring you greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ from your brothers and sisters in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in America. Together we share that firm commitment to the whole counsel of the Word of God, as summarized in our commonly held Reformed Standards. Looking around the Synod, we see many whom we have come to know as good friends and brothers in Christ. Speaking personally, it has been a delight to work with your Dr. Arjan De Visser, Jack Visscher, and Riemer Faber on different NAPARC and ICRC committees over the years. And we want to thank you for sending the Rev. Messrs. Eric Kampen and Cornelius Poppe as your fraternal delegates to our 2014 General Assembly. Lord willing, at our General Assembly next month, we are planning to celebrate God’s faithfulness to His people on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of our founding.

While we in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church have had our own share of challenges and difficulties, we continue to rejoice in God’s blessings upon us. At the end of 2015, our total membership was just over 31,000, and the total number of our congregations, all of which are located in the United States, Puerto Rico, or southern Ontario (Canada), reached 325 (278 organized congregations and 47 unorganized mission works) in 17 presbyteries. We had 535 ministers, 1,094 ruling elders (77 percent actively serving), and 879 deacons (78 percent actively serving).

Significant decisions by our general assembly since your last triennial Synod in 2013 (Carman [West]) have included:

- (2013) We received, with thanksgiving to the Lord, the final reports from two different special committees that were established by previous general assemblies to visit two troubled presbyteries;
- (2014) In response to an overture from one our presbyteries, we established a committee to study “whether and in which particular senses the concept of the Mosaic Covenant as a republication of the Adamic Covenant is consistent with the doctrinal system taught in [our] confessional standards”; and we established a special committee to “assist the Presbytery in dealing with matters that divide it ... contingent upon receiving a request for such assistance from the Presbytery”;
- (2014) We sent a letter to the General Assembly of the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) to plead with our brothers not to adopt their study committee’s recommendations to open the ruling and teaching offices in the church to those whom the Scriptures bar from performing the functions of such offices;
- (2014) We approved the metrical psalms, psalm paraphrases, and psalm partials in the joint OPC-URCNA Psalter-Hymnal (and the 2014 Synod of the URCNA approved the same);
- (2015) We entered into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (i.e., Sister Church relationship) with the IPB (*Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil*—Presbyterian Church of Brazil), which has roughly one million members in 4,200 congregations in 270 presbyteries in 65 synods, with which we have been informally working in our missionary labors in Uruguay for several years;

(2015) In response to an overture from one of our presbyteries, we established a Special Committee to Consider Canadian Matters “to study issues related to expanding the presence of the OPC in Canada, including ecumenical, financial, and strategic matters”; and

(2015) In response to the action of the 69th General Assembly of the RCJ in October 2014 to proceed, by an overwhelming majority and despite our plea to the contrary, with the amendment of its church *Polity* to remove the male-only requirements for the offices of minister and ruling elder, we suspended our relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCJ upon those amendments going into effect in October 2015.

And significant matters on the agenda for our 2016 General Assembly next month include:

- Receiving the final report of the Special Committee to Study Republication; and the final report of the special committee to assist the Presbytery;
- Approving the 428 hymns for the joint OPC-URCNA Psalter-Hymnal, which upon the approval of the 2016 Synod of the URCNA (which convenes near the end of our general assembly), completes the final approval process necessary to proceed with the publication of the new *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.

Our Committee on Christian Education continues to publish the denominational news magazine, *New Horizons*, and *Ordained Servant: A Journal for Church Officers*, which is now in its twenty-first year. Our website, OPC.ORG, averaged almost 67,000 unique visitors per month and received more than thirteen million hits last year (including almost 85,000 from China). The Committee also organizes an annual “Timothy Conference” to identify and encourage young men, ages 16–21, with apparent gifts for the gospel ministry; the “Shiloh Institute” to recruit able men, ages 21 through first-year seminarian, for ministry in the OPC; and the Ministerial Training Institute to assist in maintaining and enhancing the quality of ministerial service in the OPC. Last year, the Committee also provided assistance to fifteen summer and ten year-long internships. In cooperation with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), we operate Great Commission Publications, which produces Sunday school materials and other Reformed literature.

Our Committee on Foreign Missions presently sends missionaries to China, Ethiopia, Haiti, Quebec, Switzerland/Austria, Uganda, Ukraine, and Uruguay. Over the past few years, we have also enjoyed the privilege of rubbing shoulders with missionaries from the ARPC, FRCAus, FRCNA, HRC, IPB, IRCK, KAPC, PCA, RCSA, RCNZ, RCUS, RPCNA, URCNA—and you all!—on the foreign fields. The Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps is now regularly helping to train church leaders in Colombia, and we are working to develop opportunities in other lands as well. In China we are responding to requests from networks of house churches that have come to Reformed convictions and now desire to organize themselves biblically and to regularize their ordinations; one indigenous presbytery has already been organized. Among the Karimojong in northeastern Uganda, we are seeing a first generation of Bible teachers beginning to emerge. And, Mr. Moderator, if you will permit me, please allow me to share with you our urgent need for a medical doctor to labor at our medical clinic in South Karamoja—perhaps one of you knows of a doctor, who loves the Lord Jesus and the doctrines of grace, and who would be willing to go to this remote outpost to help extend the Compassion of Jesus with us. And we continue to wait upon the Lord for an opportunity to resume our labors in Eritrea, where 2,000–3,000 of our Christian brothers and sisters currently languish in prison for the sake of Christ—many of whom are being beaten and kept in closed shipping containers in the hot desert sun, and some have died.



Presently, the OPC has Ecclesiastical Fellowship with seventeen churches (including the CanRC), and Corresponding Relations with ten churches. The OPC is actively involved as one of the thirteen member churches of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), and one of the thirty-two member churches of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

We give thanks to our Lord for bringing our two churches so closely together for the past fifteen years. We love you. We pray for you. We continue to rejoice in the fellowship that we have in Christ. Let me close with these words from our Lord that are inscribed on the tombstone of one of our martyred missionaries: *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* (Rev. 2:10)

Thank you and may God’s peace be with you.

APPENDIX 6 – RCUS: Address by the Rev. George Horner of the Reformed Church in the United States

On behalf of the Reformed Church in the United States I am privileged to bring you fraternal greetings from your fellow ministers and elders of the RCUS Synod. We rejoice in the ecclesiastical relationship we enjoy with you, our brothers in the Canadian Reformed Church, as we are engaged in our common mission of making disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We share common confessional standards and together affirm the authority of the Scriptures for the life and practice of the church militant as we longingly pray “Thy Kingdom Come” so the body of Christ may live in the eternal blessedness of triumphant glory consummated. But in these last days our Lord exhorts us to be **contending earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints** (Jude 3), warring with the mighty weapon of the gospel proclaimed, **casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.** (2 Cor. 10:5).

May our Lord, the Head of the church, continue to sustain and strengthen us so we do not waver nor lose hope as we, Christ’s church, experience the hatred of the world as we stand up for Jesus; for righteousness over against lawlessness; for holiness over against the ungodliness that pervades our culture, even as our commitment to our covenant God brings persecution upon us.

May we always remind ourselves of God’s faithfulness to His church for the sake of His eternally decreed, gracious salvation of sinners.... Christ gathering and defending and persevering His church by His Word and Spirit. The gospel we boldly proclaim, the gospel of which we are never ashamed, will not fail, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes (Rom 1:16).

What a glorious work is our mandate from our risen Lord to make disciples of all the nations. May we continue to encourage one another to not allow the devil, the world and the flesh from heralding our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the last Adam, the only hope for redemption in this perishing world.

May the Lord continue to stir us up so that our lives are a testimony to having the true faith; the faith working through love (Gal. 5:6). May our Christian love for neighbors, near and far, lead them to become joined to the church, wherever Christ is building it.

The Reformed Church in the United States, about to hold its 270th Synod in Bakersfield CA, beginning this May 16th, currently has 48 member congregations in 4 Classes. 6 churches are mission works under the oversight of an established congregation, and a minister has just recently been called and installed with the intent of establishing a church in Omaha, NE.

The RCUS has one Spanish -speaking mission work in Shafter CA. The Synod’s Foreign Ministries Committee has been active in our support of the United Reformed Churches in the Congo, The Reformed Fellowship Church of Kenya and the United Covenant Reformed Church in the Philippines. Our support includes financial aid as well as sending ministers for short periods to teach, train, preach for the building up of those churches with whom we have established a relationship, and also, there is economic aid made available in certain situations.

The RCUS also supports the French radio broadcast ministry: Reformed Faith and Life.



Synod has budgeted for a Synodical Foreign Mission's Coordinator, which will be a new position.

The RCUS is thankful for its ecclesiastical relationship with the CanRC, also as we work together as member churches of NAPARC and the ICRC.

In the President's Report given at our last Synod, he asked the question: are we properly recognizing our opportunities for mission? Are we thinking as strategically as we ought to? Instead of thinking extensively (going to fields where we aren't), perhaps we need to think more intensively. That is, should we more aggressively develop the fields where we are. The President also noted that NAPARC denominations have studied church revitalization or "re-planting" of churches affected by demographic changes or internal struggles. The RCUS continues to seek the Lord's wisdom in meeting the challenges not only of missions, but of edifying the churches we are called to shepherd, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

At the 2105 Synod, the RCUS amended its Constitution to change the wording of the Article (195) defining marriage. This action was based on the recommendations of a special committee erected by the previous Synod out of concern, given the changing cultural views of marriage, that our RCUS constitutional, confessional and liturgical language might need to be amended in order to affirm our practice of the biblical and historic institution of marriage as the union between only one man and one woman.

The United States Supreme Court's Obergefell vs. Hodges decision of June 2016, that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by both the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, vindicated our concern.

The amended article, since ratified by all the Classes, now reads:

Marriage has been instituted by God. The Reformed Church in the United States defines "marriage" as the exclusive covenantal union of one man and one woman in which such union is a lifetime commitment. A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by The Reformed Church in the United States only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of "marriage" found in these Articles. Legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage. Hence, sexual activities outside of marriage (referred to in the New Testament as "porneia") including but not limited to, adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, and pedophilia are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the Church. (Leviticus 18-20; I Corinthians 5:1-5; 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:3-7; Heidelberg Catechism 108, 109) Further, lascivious conduct, transgender behavior, and the creation and/or distribution and/or viewing of pornography, are incompatible with the biblical witness.

Every officer, employee, or volunteer of the church shall affirm their agreement with this definition of marriage and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith. This shall be a prerequisite, and continual condition, for these positions.

The Synod also added a Standing Rule that defines who may perform a marriage, the requirements to be met by applicants for marriage ceremony, and the criteria by which the premises of a church may be used for such a ceremony.

I have copies of this amendment and standing rule available.



We are pleased to hear via the bilateral meeting between the Can RC and the RCUS that the six normal day interpretation of Creation is what lives in your congregations. May our respective churches continue to encourage one another, in our communion in the unity of the true faith, to remain steadfast in the doctrines of our common confessions.

We pray the Lord would bless the deliberations and decisions of this Synod, and grant you much fruit in the labors of your gospel ministry for the growth of the Can RC to the glory of God.

With fraternal greetings in Christ.

APPENDIX 7 – RPCNA: Address by the Rev. Bruce Backensto of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

Note: what follows has been transcribed from a very poor sound recording that began a little way into the speech.

... you might have a blessed fellowship with him, wicked, despicable, filthy rags that we are. Whatever righteousness we think we ought to be able to bring, Jesus prayed, “Father, may they be one as we are one,” and Paul said, “We gain unity in the body of Christ.” ...

There are things about us that are extremely different, aren't there? We come from Scotland; you come from Holland. But you know, you are the ones in Rotterdam who gave the exiled Covenanters a home. [John Bradley Longford??] went there in 1660—to The Netherlands—and had the privilege of worshipping in the Scots International Church there in Rotterdam. What a blessing it was! So we have a common bond back in the 1600s already, in The Netherlands.

The Islamic abomination is something we have to deal with. It's growing and growing and growing. And the answer to that is the gospel of Jesus Christ, lived by the followers of Jesus Christ in such a way that we show genuine respect and true love for one another in Christ.

I've had the opportunity to look at the preliminary report and all I can say is that it's spot-on. I don't see how you can come to any other conclusion than what's recommended there ... your churches that we're going to commit ecclesiastical fellowship with a denomination that has women deacons ...takes your breath away! I held that position that there ought not to be women deacons, and by God's grace I came to understand that that was not the right position. But I understand the position that says women ought not be deacons. And so those who have...to get very much for them...than we are right now. The evidence of the committee that has convened with us at NAPARC, I trust helps each one of you understand that the more we come to know each other, the more we will be able to say ...closer and closer and closer. But it's not ... My son brought someone of...home for... Get to know the person a lot more, and we got to know each other. ...The point...we stand together in the gospel if we're going to see the atrocities go on this long—secular humanism and so forth. ... Because I come from a covenanting tradition which understands that the civil magistrate is to be in covenant with God, and that's the beauty—....!—...that we understand that Jesus Christ through his work of redemption on the cross...raised him the head of the church, and the head of the family, ...head of the state...we can get our...to work...governmental matters.

I've had the privilege of seeing the Lord raise up two presbyteries in China who are a RPCNA presbytery. Isn't that crazy? How can there be RP presbyteries in China? Well, Lord willing, in about maybe eight years they will be on their own. We've had a couple of their pastors come to our seminary for an opportunity to talk about the matters of civil magistrates, Christ's relationship, and they've gone home believing that China might be the next Christian nation... Revolutions have come in the country...Christians are. ... gospel. ...China...

So, it's been, again, wonderful to be here. I trust that together we will grow and that we will grow the better. And I hope that the ...this level, but perhaps at a classis level, a presbytery level. There aren't a lot of you around us in Pennsylvania, or a lot of us around you... ... seminary. ...some of you...privilege it was to ...the Lord...to tell you the stories about the...



So I just thank you for your warmth and fellowship, and do pray that we can show the love of Christ to the world that needs to know him, that we can share the ...rich graces of God in the Reformed heritage that we share. I am sorry that I have to leave—I have a funeral on Saturday to attend to, and that’s a farther drive than ...here...Saturday.

So, thank you for your time, and God bless you.



APPENDIX 8 – FCC: Letter of Greeting from the Rev. John MacLeod of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

We greatly regret that the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) have been unable to send a representative to the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Church as none of our North American ministers were free to attend at the time of Synod.

We will make special efforts to ensure that this situation does not, if we can possibly manage, occur again.

We send to the Canadian Reformed Churches our warmest greetings.

APPENDIX 9 – FRCSA: Address by the Rev. Dirk M. Boersma of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

Dear brothers and sisters,

Meetings and fellowship

During the five years I was a minister in Denver, CO, I was never delegated to Synod. I felt like standing outside the doors of a frequent flier lounge at an airport. Not enough miles (experience) so you don't get in! I am so happy that I live in South Africa now. I fly finally collected enough miles (and perhaps some experience?). The doors of the lounge swung open for me: this is already your third synod I can attend!

All jest aside, I really see it as a privilege to be here.

It gives me great joy to travel halfway around the world and meet churches and brothers and sisters who also belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and follow him.

It is beautiful to taste the unity and love you have for each other. I can sense it in the way you discuss and listen to each other.

I am not talking about recognition of a common culture (in Dutch they call it 'spruitjesgeur' - like the smell of Brussels sprouts and oliebollen) that goes back to our common Dutch roots.

Visiting churches in different cultures and attending these Synod discussions is refreshing and it is a learning experience to see what is essential and where we can joyfully differ from each other. And as we recognize and embrace the truths we hold so dear, the doctrines of grace, we rejoice in our unity in Christ and we work together in his kingdom.

Greetings

First, it is my great pleasure to bring you greetings from your South-African sister churches. We appreciate the bond we have with you. We experience it as a blessing from Christ that we receive support and encouragement from you, and that we are in your prayers.

The FRCSA and its challenges

Since every Synod consists of a different group of delegates, it can be helpful if I give you an overview of the FRCSA and its recent developments.

The FRCSA consist of 7 instituted churches and 7 mission points with a total of 3.5 pastors and 7.5 missionaries in active service. I estimate our total membership to be between 2000 and 2500 members, with 1/3 of them being members in the mission points.

So you see we are a small federation. And we grew smaller yet. The church of Bethal, which left the Dutch Reformed Churches in SA to join the FRC in 1995, was disbanded in April. It had been reduced to 30 members after a crisis in the congregation.

We remain with three more needy churches. We are thankful to the FRCA, who are so generous to support our needy churches fund.

Mission work

When the Dutch immigrants started the FRCSA in the fifties, they were faithful and generous and started building church buildings and two schools. They also started to spread the gospel. But when a missionary was needed, the mission work was handed over to the Dutch churches. 30

Years later, the responsibility was transferred to the South African churches. The churches in the Northern provinces of the RCN continued to support the mission work.

Thus far we had churches in areas that were separated into ‘white’ and ‘black’. The country has changed as people began moving around after the barriers had officially been removed. Many areas are mixed. Therefore since 2009 we also have one mission church that is multi-racial and multi-cultural. I am thankful for the privilege to plant this church myself, and I see a beautiful unity growing between black and white members, SA citizens and foreigners, and people speaking different languages. This is a new experience in our mission work.

We experienced a change in the mission points. The rapid growth of the nineties has slowed and we now focus less on expansion. We have begun to focus on training, discipleship, and maturity of faith. One of the missionaries focuses solely on training now.

Fewer pastors

We lost so many pastors! Six in seven years.

2009: Rev Pieter Nel from Bethal was deposed.

2013: Rev Jerry Mhlanga was deposed and Rev Tjeerd de Boer (missionary) returned to the Netherlands.

2014: The bond between Rev Eugene Viljoen and the church of Cape Town was dissolved. He was available for a call but did not receive any. Sadly, he is now no longer a pastor in the FRCSA.

2015: Rev Kees Kleijn (Joburg) retired and Rev Jelle Drijfhout (Pretoria) returned to the Netherlands.

Three churches are looking for Afrikaans-speaking pastors. Afrikaans-speaking pastors are as scarce as hen’s teeth (as the South African expression goes). On top of that, work permits are harder to come by.

In the meantime, the Lord had already provided black students from South Africa for the ministry. In about the same time frame, four students (including Phineas Kgatle who was in Hamilton for 6 months) have become missionaries and pastors.

For the training of future students, we need a training solution tailored for South Africa. We do not have enough pastors to set up our own theological training. Sending students to another continent is not healthy and unaffordable.

This is also an area where we appreciate the cooperation with your churches. Two of our curators hope to have discussions with CRTS this year.

Support

The report of your CCCA deputies is correct in mentioning that our churches face significant challenges in both missions and sustainability.

Three mission churches that were instituted, became needy churches. Our bond of churches is definitely not self-sufficient. A disproportionate amount of money for missions and mission-related projects comes from our sister churches in Canada, Australia and the Netherlands.

We are very thankful that the RCN (GKv) churches support our missions project (90%) . Otherwise we could barely have had one missionary. Then, a while ago, the Australian sister



churches started to support the needy churches in our midst. And then you, the Canadian churches, started supporting the mission work and specific projects *Khothatsong*, our HIV-Aids committee, and the *Reformed Study Center*. The latter is a unique project consisting of a library and an electronic delivery service of Reformed and exegetical materials to hundreds and hundreds of pastors all over the world who don't have access to these resources.

Because foreign aid makes our members dependent and lazy, a special synod was held in 2012 to discuss financial dependence and sustainability. The plan is to reduce the inflow of foreign support and to stand more on our own feet. Whether the result will look like an ostrich or a flamingo, we will see...

In all these things we depend on the Lord, who has made the sister churches generous and is also able to make all members in our churches more generous and more responsible in their stewardship.

We are small and dependent. But we do not think about this every day, we just carry out our calling and trust in the Lord.

We realize that every church of Jesus is dependent, including you, the big sisters. So we agree with what Paul wrote about the collection to Jerusalem. Churches should not feel more or less important depending on the number of members and the amount of resources God has put in their hands.

So it is our prayer that we may continue to encourage and support each other, and that our prayers on both sides of the Atlantic will not cease but rather increase, for the glory of Christ.

May he bless you richly!

APPENDIX 10 – GKv: Address by the Rev. J.M. (Kim) Batteau and Prof. Peter Bakker of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – liberated

Dear brothers of the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches,

Heart-felt greetings in Christ from your older sister in The Netherlands, the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated)!

My colleague Prof. Peter Bakker and I have been given the commission to be present here at your Synod on behalf of our federation, to greet and address you, and participate in discussions concerning our relationship.

Thank you for inviting us, and arranging for staying at the Bill and Elaine Spriensma family's home in Grimsby! Thanks to the Spriensma family for having us! Thanks also for inviting us to join you for the meals! We hope to be here till Tuesday afternoon, May 17.

My name is John M. (Kim) Batteau. I know some of you personally, through study and our mutual involvement in the life of orthodox Reformed and Presbyterian churches in the world down through the years. Prof. Niek Gootjes was a colleague of mine at Kosin Seminary in South Korea the 1980's. I had the privilege of filling in for him in doing some teaching at your seminary in Hamilton in the year 2000. It is sad that he is now very ill with Alzheimer's disease. We give thanks to the Lord for his many years of service to the Canadian Reformed Churches. Thankfully, my wife Margreet and I have kept up our close contacts with Niek's family: his wife Dinie, who lives in Hamilton, and two of his sons, Albert and Kees, who live in The Netherlands with their wives and children.

I retired in 2011, and am kept busy by, among other things, babysitting my grandchildren, preaching regularly, doing some translation work, and being involved in various church committees. I was until recently the editor-in-chief of our English-language magazine, *Lux Mundi*, which some of you know, and of which Rev. Karlo Janssen, your 1st clerk of this Synod, is an editor. We hope that this magazine will eventually become the journal of the ICRC in the future, with a fully representative international editorial board. We have already taken steps in that direction.

My colleague with me here is Prof. Peter Bakker. Peter is a retired Prof. of Aerospace Engineering at the Technological University of Delft. He has served our churches in various capacities, and is now the chairman of our BBK Committee, our Committee for Relations with Foreign Churches. He is also a member of the BBK subcommittee which maintains contacts with churches in North America and Europe.

We are glad we can be here to once again connect at this formal level as sister-churches, to meet you personally, to revive old friendships, to discuss our relationship, and to share in the task of seeking to serve the Lord in our world.

We are here at a particularly difficult moment in our relationship as sister-churches. Your Subcommittee for Relations with churches in The Netherlands, the SRN, has presented a report with recommendations concerning relations with us in The Netherlands. The SRN recommends that you severely restrict our sister-relationship due to various developments in our churches, abbreviated as the RCN.

Their recommendations are:



1) To no longer automatically accept attestations from members from RCN, and to stop the privilege of RCN ministers automatically being able to preach in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Close screening is called for.

2) If the next Synod of the RCN clearly demonstrates a return to the authority of Scripture, with respect to issues of the Seminary in Kampen, women in church office, and matters such as homosexuality, the normal sister-church relationship can resume. But if the course of what is called the present deformation continues, then the sister-church relationship will be ended.

A number of reasons are given for this advice. Mention is made of a new hermeneutics affecting biblical interpretation, the lack of clarity of the seminary in Kampen about homosexuality, and the seeking of unity with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerk (the NGK churches) as indicating an acceptance of women's ordination.

These recommendations and the reasons for them are of course very serious matters, and call for serious consideration. It is not the role of brother Bakker and myself to discuss the recommendations with the reasons in detail at this time. We have the charge from our Synod to greet you, to attempt to clarify what our Synod has officially decided and made public, and to describe the situation of our churches, including the challenges we are facing. We hope to be able to do that in discussion with your synod committee evaluating the SRN report. If you would like us to try to clarify some points in a plenary session of this Synod, we are willing to try to do that, after first having a discussion with your committee here. Finally, it is up to you as a Synod to look carefully at the recommendations of your committee regarding the SRN report and the reasons given, and see if you support them. Then you will communicate your decisions to our next coming Synod, which will have the task of responding.

In general we would like to say that we are convinced that at this moment such far-reaching step as advised by the SRN would be premature. For example, take the matter of women in church office. At the moment a committee, appointed by our last Synod, is looking into the biblical basis for church offices, to see whether women as deacons, or elders, or ministers, is biblically acceptable. They have not made public their findings or recommendations. It could very well be that they do not recommend women holding any church office. It could very well be that they will recommend a change of how we fill in the church offices, with more room for the official recognition of women's gifts, while at the same time reserving church leadership to men. Affirming that men have a leadership role in the church was made a prerequisite of this committee's work at our last Synod. We just do not know at this moment what the committee will recommend. So we would advise you to wait until our coming Synod responds to the recommendations of this committee, before jumping to the conclusion that our churches are already in favor of women in office.

A second matter is that of homosexuality. The last official pronouncement of one of our Synods was to reject homosexuals living together. At the moment there is a lot of discussion among our church people, primarily informal and in the media, about this volatile issue. Some local churches are apparently very patient in dealing with homosexual members living together. At the moment, no official Synod committee of our churches is looking into this matter.

Our sister-churches in The Netherlands, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (the CGK), unanimously rejected accepting homosexuals having sexual relations with each other as unbiblical at their last Synod. However, 12 local churches have objected to this decision, and the coming CGK Synod will be dealing with those objections.



The NGK Synod has recently rejected allowing practicing homosexuals to hold church offices, but at the local level some of their congregations do allow homosexual couples to the Lord's Supper. To be honest, this is a big problem facing various church federations in The Netherlands, including ours. However, the situation is fluid as to what our churches as a whole, officially represented at the coming Synod, might say about it. We would advise you to wait and see which direction our churches will be going officially on this issue, before jumping to conclusions. That would be premature.

We would like to emphasize that we strongly believe that biblical Reformed church bodies in the world need each other. We in The Netherlands need you. And you here in Canada need us. If you believe that we are threatening to deviate from biblical orthodoxy, then we need to hear from you as a deeply concerned sister in the Lord. Paul began his letters to churches by affirming that, for example in his first letter to the Corinthians, the believers there were truly “a church of God” and the members truly “sanctified in Christ” (1 Cor. 1:2), while later in the letter castigating them severely for sectarianism (chapter 3), immorality (chapter 5), lawsuits between brothers (chapter 6), drunkenness at the Lord's Supper (chapter 11), and allowing some to deny the resurrection from the dead (chapter 15). Quite a list of flagrant sins! Yet he calls them a church and sanctified in Christ at the beginning of the letter. I hope you would do the same with us, if you signal serious doctrinal error, or allowing doctrinal error on our part. See us as true churches, and sanctified in Christ, based on our credible profession of faith as a church federation, but then do not hold back in calling us to repentance and change where necessary. And, like Paul, come back to us later with another letter, evaluating how we have responded to your admonitions. But please don't cut off contact or fellowship prematurely.

If you cut short your relationship with us in a premature way, that would be a real shame, and do damage to the Lord's work, both in The Netherlands, and around the world where we work together in different ways. For example, our membership in the ICRC might be at risk. Our Synod has given the committee investigating biblical church offices the charge to consult all our sister-churches, before making their recommendations. This means we value our ecumenical relations highly and take them very seriously.

We would not like to paint a rosy picture of our churches in The Netherlands which is not in line with reality. We are surrounded and influenced by a secular, in many cases anti-Christian culture, just as you are. There are signs of weakness in our church life. For example, the second, afternoon service is in many places not well attended, and in certain places it is no longer held. The challenge we face of holding on to our young people is great. On the other hand, we can point to spiritual vitality and biblical renewal in many places. More and more believers are seeing and heeding the call to radical discipleship, instead of mere formal membership. It is true: we are believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, but we are also sinners who can be misled and are misled in too many cases. We need to help each other, across the world, be faithful to Him. We would urge you to keep on calling us to faithfulness and obedience to Christ, and do that as a concerned sister in the Lord.

May the Lord bless your Synod in its work. May your labors contribute to the proclamation of the Gospel, the clarity of the biblical message, and the unity and purity of the church, in Canada, the U.S., and the world!

APPENDIX 11 – URCNA: Address by the Rev. John A. Bouwers of the United Reformed Churches in North America

My dear brothers in our one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

Greetings in the strong name of our faithful Saviour!

I count it a high honour that once again I may be here in your midst for the assembly your General Synod, and that, together with my brothers Rev. Steve Swets of Hamilton and Rev. William Van Hal of London, we may represent the United Reformed Churches in North America as fraternal delegates to this assembly. We have also encouraged our local pastors and members to drop in if they are able to witness a Canadian Reformed General Synod first hand, to be edified and encouraged by your careful deliberations.

According to our most recent directory the URCs are now made up of some 120 churches in North America including over 24,000 souls. About one third of our churches are in Canada in three classes, while the other two thirds are in the United States spread over 5 more classes. Our churches in Canada are largely in areas where your churches are also located, and our churches in the United States are, obviously, for the most part, in areas where your churches are... not. That also gives rise to some of the dynamics and challenges to the unity we are called to pursue. But you already knew that.

Brothers, our churches really need no introduction to your General Synod. We are well known to you. Our sister church relationship at the Phase 2 level of Ecclesiastical Fellowship has been one that we have enjoyed together since the decisions of our respective Synods Neerlandia and Escondido in 2001. You continue to show great interest in and express loving commitment to the relationship that has been established. Yes, the relationship has experienced a number of disappointing setbacks. And, no, the progress has not always been what many would have hoped for. I recently read a description of our relationship where it was referred to as something of a continuing saga. When I think of a saga, I think of something of a long drawn out affair, but something that nevertheless captures your attention. Well, as sad as it may be that our relationship has not proceeded at the speed at which some may have hoped, we are nevertheless grateful that the relationship still commands your attention, consideration and dedication.

Harkening back to the decisions of our respective Synods in 2001, perhaps you recall that the original hope and expectation was that full unity could have been attained by 2004. We've fallen short of that original expectation by more than a decade, and honesty requires us to acknowledge that full unification, while it ought to remain our goal, cannot even be expected on the near horizon. Hindsight enables us to acknowledge as well that the original 2004 goal was naïve, and forging ahead then, as now, would have been unwise and unhelpful. The unity the Lord Jesus prays and works for, enjoins and envisions in His High Priestly Prayer in John 17 is a unity that must be given from above. It cannot and should not be manufactured or foisted upon the churches except to our mutual detriment, long-term. We must be honest and real with regard to the challenges we face.

That being said, my conviction here tonight is that we may be hopeful, not gloomy. So, let us also be deeply grateful for what *has* been accomplished, for the progress that has been enjoyed, for the blessing that has been experienced in relations between our churches. At the fundamental level of confessional agreement, the outstanding perception that there may be different,



incompatible views of the covenant in our respective federations was faced head on at our last synod, Synod Visalia 2014. The colloquium that involved Dr. Ted Van Raalte and Dr. Jason Van Vliet from the Canadian Reformed side, and Dr. Robert Godfrey and Dr. Cornel Venema from the URC was hugely successful and encouraging. The professors were able to conclude together in the presence of the URC Synod that in spite of our historical differences and varieties of expression, we do nevertheless find each other's positions within Confessional bounds. This means we have, and ought to enjoy, fundamental Confessional unity. Ecumenically speaking, as we live up to and out of our confession, we can see that we have a place to stand and a place from which to move forward, in God's good time.

More practically, and more locally, in virtually every place where we have engaged our relationship together, we can say that we know each other much better, are functioning well together, and we experience the Lord's hand of blessing.

I know the courtship analogy has been overused, and I know that every analogy breaks down at some point, just by virtue of being an analogy there are always ways in which it does not and should not apply. But allow me to risk the use of a tired, potentially overused analogy, to say this: When a couple is engaged to be married, and as wedding day draws ever closer, they often find to their continued delight that they continue to learn more things about each other. Some of those things are disappointing, there are perhaps those blemishes or habits that show up a little more prominently (I hadn't seen that, I wouldn't do that), but with a view toward the blessing of a marriage that pleases and glorifies God, you either deal with it, put up with it, or get over it. And you do so happily.

But there's more, there's much more. The blessing is bigger and more encouraging. There's also the reality that the more you see of each other, the more you appreciate each other. You see new things that encourage you deeply, you continue to learn things from the other that you never knew for yourself. I like what I see. I love you more every day. The relationship becomes richer and deeper. So to bring the analogy home, I speak from my own experience, and my sense is that I speak for many from both of our federations. The more we see in each other through our continued interaction, the work of God's grace in Jesus Christ, the richer, the deeper the appreciation we have for each other. I believe that to be real. It's a real part of the blessing that we have been experiencing together. Yes, we see, and we get used to each other's blemishes. But we also love each other and appreciate each other more fervently for our mutual commitment to a like and precious faith. When we take the time to look, we like what we see.

I don't typically encourage long engagements, but if we may be permitted now to change the analogy again, and it's indeed a saga we're talking about, let us say that by God's grace, we're in for the long haul.

Allow me to fill you in briefly with regards to the developments we are considering with regard to URC/CanRC ecumenical relations at our upcoming Synod. There are three overtures from two classes that, if adopted by the churches at Synod would have restricting implications on the prospect for the advancement of our relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. One asks for a halting of all efforts and processes toward unification with the Canadian Reformed Churches. To be clear, this overture does not seek to undo the relationship our churches do enjoy, nor does it intend that the relationship might never advance, it does however seek to halt the progress so that our relationship should remain at the point at which we are presently. This same classis asks that the PJCO (Proposed Joint Church Order), which Synod Nyack 2012



received for information, be declared unusable, with the contention that the proposal is too hierarchical. Another overture from another classis seeks a softening of the mandate of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity. While still allowing for the possibility of pursuing full organic unity between churches of like and precious faith, the overture seeks to allow for more comfort and contentment for churches to be satisfied with a more of an arm's length Phase 2 ecclesiastical fellowship relationship.

In our own CERCU committee's discussions at NAPARC last November, as well as in our discussions with your Coordinators for Church Unity (CCU), we came to the conclusion together that we will not make any recommendations concerning stepping forward to the next phase of relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches for at least the next six years.

It was our conviction, given the concerns expressed in some parts of our federation, particularly where the blessing of unity with the Canadian Reformed have not been experienced firsthand, that *greater* hope for eventual unity would be better served long-term if the pressure of an impending next-step was removed.

It is our prayer and commitment that in the meantime our work on our relationship should continue as we continue to encourage churches to work through whatever concerns and difficulties might yet stand in the way of making progress in our relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Our American classes have profited from the visits made by Rev. Willem den Hollander on behalf of you Committee for Unity. But, as has been reported, ambivalence remains. Given this reality, since our last Synod, our CERCU committee has also sought to engage particularly the American URC classes, and the chairman of our committee has made visits to four of the five US classes, encouraging the pursuit of greater unity and seeking to understand the outstanding concerns and objections to it. Particularly since the Colloquium at Synod Visalia, we have heard from a number in the US churches that since the potential confessional concerns have been addressed, they have become much more favorable with regards to the pursuit of unity with the Canadian Reformed.

Where lingering concerns have been expressed, they can be summarized as follows. Some have articulated the fear, quite simply and quite frankly, that joining with the Canadian Reformed Churches would change us. A number remain unconvinced that we are bound by any sort of obligation to pursue greater unity. Also, there remains a general concern among a number of our churches with regard to our perception that the proposed joint church order contains aspects that are hierarchical. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, there are others, particularly in classis MI and classis PNW that have spoken of negative experiences with expressions of a narrow ecclesiology in particular Canadian (American) Reformed congregations in their vicinity. Is it possible, brothers, that by virtue of their own continued isolation, even from the rest of your own congregations, that your American congregations have not kept pace with the positive steps toward unity that have been taken by their Canadian counterparts? It is our perception that this dynamic plays a significant role in the lingering opposition being experienced in these particular American URC classes.

It also needs to be reiterated, positively, that over the long term, wherever this relationship has been engaged, the result has gradually but overwhelmingly been one of growing love, mutual appreciation and trust, as well as increased cooperation in such things as education, evangelism, youth activities, conferences, joint services, and pulpit exchanges. Vacant churches have made mutual use of the pastors of our respective federations to great blessing. A relationship of trust



has been established so that ministers and candidates are being called across federational lines, and joint home mission works are being undertaken where Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches are standing together to establish a work and call a church planter. It should also be said that the negative experiences with a narrow ecclesiology were the regular concerns of our Canadian URCs about this relationship a decade and a half ago. But that concern has diminished considerably. We have learned that some of this was owing to misunderstanding and misperception, we have also learned that as we engaged these matters and engaged each other, the Lord has actually brought about change. We rejoice in what we see as an indication of the blessing we have been to each other in our Phase 2 relationship.

Brothers, all of this to say, let's by the grace of God stay the course. Let us persevere brothers with patient, prayerful persistence. The unity we enjoy is precious. Greater unity, by the grace of God would be better still. Jesus prays to the end that our spiritual unity be manifested. We believe that greater organizational unity would be a God-glorifying application, a helpful way of bringing the unity Jesus prayed for to expression. We recognize that it would not be proper to assert that this is the only possible application, or the only way of bringing this unity to expression. But if, by the grace of God, greater organizational unity can be safely and wisely attained, we believe it would serve the well-being of the church and enhance our mission.

To one degree or another, greater unity must always be something of a goal in all of our relationships. As long as we remain on this side of Christ's return, we will not have "arrived," we must continue to pray and work for greater expressions of unity. Let us continue to commit, brothers to patient, prayerful persistence in the work. Let us not be discouraged, and let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap a reward if we do not lose heart.

APPENDIX 12 – CRTS: Address by the Rev. Dr. G.H. Visscher of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

Thank you for the invitation for all of us to join you around the dinner table and in this session this evening. I will keep it brief as I was asked this morning just to “speak a few words.”

If I look back over the years that it has been my privilege to be principal, the big word certainly has been “ACCREDITATION.” It has been a very beneficial and also exhausting process for us to seek such accreditation through the Association of Theological Schools.

ATS has been careful not to interfere in any way with our confessional position. They are happy to see working out our theological program on the basis of that position. ATS is more concerned about the process and manner in which programs are delivered and degrees are attained. With one document they told us: this is what a seminary should look like. With the other document they told us: this is what a Master of Divinity degree should look like. And they then set us to the task of comparing our institution and programs to those documents, and of implementing the necessary changes. The changes that have resulted have really been quite extensive, and far too numerous to count, even though the core curriculum has changed very little. The overall result is that CRTS has become more professional, more intentional and consultative about everything that CRTS does.

It was with a great deal of relief and satisfaction that *we were granted accreditation status as of September 2013*, a few months after Synod Carman (see www.ats.edu). Thus the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary is now a fully accredited and recognized educational institution!

One significant byproduct of all this is that the sabbatical system is now incorporated into the program and will now happen with greater regularity. A possible result would be that we would see more scholarly output by faculty, and hopefully increased attention to CRTS.

Presently though, after having gone through this very arduous process, we are just enjoying the time in which we can focus on our teaching and on mentoring future ministers of the Word. There is also another significant result – each of the five faculty members now specifically and individually mentors one-fifth of the student body hoping to assist them through whatever issues they may have and attempting to ensure that they will be suitably prepared for a life of ministry.

Looking to the future, there is a challenge that lies before us all. At the moment we have the highest number of students ever (21) and it’s easy to conclude that with a high number of graduates this year, the federations will be okay for a while. However, when you explore the total number of declared vacancies at present in every church and mission post throughout Canada and Australia, you come to the number 28! Considering the number of those who will yet retire in the foreseeable years, it is rather apparent that enrollment needs to increase significantly at CRTS lest we have a significant ministerial shortage in the future. As a federation and as office bearers, we have a significant challenge before us – one of convincing our young men to enroll at CRTS and to prepare for a lifetime of ministry.

Presently in that student body, we also have two students from the URCNA. And alongside of two students from Korea, we have a student from Poland, as we are hoping to export Reformed theology in this way. We also have meetings planned later this month with brothers from our sister churches in South Africa to explore what we can do for theological education for their



churches.

We have a great team of professors - and you are requested to agree with that with regard to tenure for Dr. Smith and Dr. van Vliet, we have a wonderfully supportive staff, and have thoroughly enjoyed the present student body. CRTS is a happy place to be, under God's blessing. I am sure I speak for all in the seminary community when I thank you for your support of the seminary. We do continue to covet your prayers for the path going forward.

The plan is for me to continue to be principal until September 2017. But already at this point I thank you also for the support I have personally received in this role.

May God continue to bless us all in every way.

APPENDIX 13 – SCBP: Address by the Rev. George VanPopta, on behalf of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*

Esteemed Brothers,

On behalf of the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* I am honoured and pleased to present to you, and through you to the churches, the third edition of the *Book of Praise*. But allow me to preface the presentation with a few words of history.

When our forefathers arrived in Canada in the early 1950s they noticed the absence of an English Psalter that used the familiar and beloved Genevan tunes. There was discussion as to what to do. Should the churches use the *Psalter Hymnal* of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC)? Or should they make their own Genevan Psalter? Although the worship services were first held in the Dutch language, in which they could use the Dutch Psalter, they felt it important to develop an English one.

At the first Synod (Homewood-Carman, 1954) the churches agreed that the 34 Psalms in the CRC *Psalter Hymnal* that were set to Genevan tunes could be used. Further the Synod decided to appoint deputies with the instruction to study the whole matter of the rhymed version of the Psalms in the English language and to report to the churches at the next Synod (Homewood-Carman, 1958).

The deputies got to work. They published a little booklet with the 34 Psalms. The idea, at first, was not necessarily to produce a Psalter set exclusively to Genevan tunes; rather, it was to produce a Calvinistic Psalter. Synod 1958 instructed the deputies "... to compose a Psalter in the English language including, if possible, other hymns of the Scripture ... and to make use of material available in the Psalter of the CRC and other Psalters in as much as the versification is faithful and tunes answer the Church musical norms." Synod 1962 said that the deputies did not need to confine themselves to Genevan tunes; however, they needed to ensure that the Psalms and hymns were faithful to Scripture and that they could be understood and sung in the churches. The rhyming had to be intelligible and the music of a high quality.

In 1961, a songbook had been published containing 82 Psalms and 14 hymns. To this was added, in 1967, a Supplement consisting of 34 more Psalms and 19 hymns. Most, though not all, of the Psalms were set to Genevan tunes. When I mention 1967 I think I am beginning to tap into the living memory of most of the members of the present synod.

Synod 1965 made some significant decisions. It instructed the deputies to include in the Psalter (at this point and thereafter called the *Book of Praise*) hymns of other parts of scripture and of the confessions. As to the melodies of the Psalms, the Synod did not restrict the deputies to Genevan tunes but said that other appropriate melodies could be used. The deputies were also authorized to publish, by way of exception, two different versions of the same Psalm (one, on a Genevan tune, one on a different tune) if not doing this would possibly result in the particular Psalm never being sung because of the melody.

Even though Synods had said that the deputies did not need to restrict themselves to the Genevan tunes for the Psalms, they, in fact, did. In their report to Synod 1968, they noted that their aim was to present to the Churches a complete Psalter comprising all 150 Psalms using Genevan tunes and that they would no longer avail themselves of the liberty offered by earlier synods to use other tunes in addition to Genevan tunes. They observed that there were many such eclectic

Psalters available, and they felt it would have been a waste of time, money, and other resources if they were to produce just one more such eclectic Psalter. Instead, they recommended that the Churches “once and for all” forsake the concept of an eclectic Psalter and proceed to the completion of a Genevan Psalter. It was their conviction that a purely Genevan Psalter would be a unique contribution to the culture of our nation, which was, for the most part, unfamiliar with the magnificent Genevan tunes. From the enthusiasm with which musicologists from many quarters had already received the still incomplete Psalter they concluded that they were not aiming too high—and we know that appreciation for the Genevan Psalter has only increased throughout the years and across the world. This change of policy meant that the non-Genevan tunes of some Psalms in the then existing *Book of Praise* would be replaced by Genevan tunes.

This has been the track upon which the Canadian Reformed Churches have been ever since, *viz.*: The Psalter exclusively Genevan and the hymn section eclectic, a mix of Genevan and non-Genevan.

The first complete *Book of Praise* was published in 1972 by order of General Synod New Westminster, 1971. It contained all 150 Psalms set to Genevan tunes, and 62 hymns.

The second complete edition of the *Book of Praise* was released in 1984. In this edition the hymns were arranged according to the order of the Apostles' Creed and several changes were made to the hymn section to give a total of 65.

General Synod Neerlandia, 2001 instructed the committee to begin the work of expanding the hymnary. The result was the publication of the *Augment* in 2007, a collection of twenty-eight hymns, nineteen of which eventually found their way into the present *Book of Praise*.

General Synod Smithers, 2007, directed the committee “...to initiate a thorough review of all 150 Psalms in the 1984 text of *Anglo-Genevan* Psalter in the *Book of Praise*.” This work was done in very close consultation with Dr. William Helder of Hamilton—and I think you will know that Dr. Helder has been involved with the production, revision, and improvement of the *Book of Praise* for many decades—and in cooperation with all the churches. Using the power of the Internet, revised Psalms were made available to the churches via a website as they were prepared by Dr. Helder and approved by the committee. As well, hard copies of the revisions were also presented to the churches.

The committee received much valuable feedback from the churches and from several *ad hoc* sub-committees, all of which was very helpful in finalizing the committee recommendations to the churches and General Synod Burlington, 2010. In a sense the whole federation had been turned into one large super committee as we worked collaboratively on this project. The committee likes to think that this has contributed to the strong sense of ownership the membership of the churches has of the *Book of Praise*. Synod Burlington approved the Authorized Provisional Version of the *Book of Praise* which all the churches of the federation used for three years, and the definitive version was approved at the most recent synod, Synod Carman, 2013. Thereupon the committee was charged with publishing the third complete edition of the *Book of Praise*.

As Canadian Reformed people and churches, we may be very thankful for the vision of the first synods. It is remarkable that a small and far-flung federation of Dutch immigrant churches had the somewhat audacious dream of producing an English Calvinistic Psalter. The dream resulted in something unique to the world: the *Book of Praise*, the only English songbook that contains the complete collection of all the tunes used in the first Genevan Psalter of John Calvin, of 1562.



It is worth noting that the *Book of Praise* is truly catholic since Reformed churches throughout the world sing the Genevan Psalms in their own languages. John Calvin would have been pleased since the catholicity of the church was dear to his heart.

The committee is thankful for the feedback, encouragement, and cooperation it has received from the churches throughout the past fifteen years, as well as the good guidance and leadership given by the General Synods convened during this time.

At this point I would like to remember our late Brother Christiaan Nobels of Brampton. He was also appointed by the Neerlandia Synod, 2001, and was due to retire at this present synod, but the Lord had decided otherwise. Chris, who worked tirelessly for our committee until the end, was taken up into Paradise on April 18th of last year.

Above all, praise and gratitude is due to our heavenly Father for providing the churches with a songbook that is used weekly and daily, in church, school, and home, to praise his most holy Name. Yes, that above all! May our God be “enthroned on the praises of Israel” (Psalm 22:3) also through the use of our songbook. To him alone be all glory, now and forever!

Thank you!

APPENDIX 14 – ERQ: Address by the Revs. Winston Bosch and Bernard Westerveld of the Reformed Church in Quebec

Dear brothers in Christ,

With thanksgiving to our heavenly Father, we address you as your sister Church serving the French-speaking people of God in the province of Quebec.

November 2013 marked the 25th anniversary of the founding of the *Église réformée du Québec* (ERQ). We celebrated this milestone with a family retreat, including a worship service of thanksgiving to our Lord for his mercies and faithfulness. The ERQ is small federation of five congregations and a total membership of 359 communicate and non-communicant members. While on the one hand, we are a fragile body, as your report notes, at the same time we represent a vibrant Reformed witness in the province of Quebec. Our existence, our perseverance in the faith, our faithful Christ-centered preaching, our numerical growth through new converts, and our spiritual growth in maturity, as well as our influence upon the protestant-evangelical witness in Quebec, all testify to our vibrant faith.

Since our last fraternal address to the Carmen-West General Synod in 2013, we would like to inform you of a number of developments in the ERQ.

- i. As reported by the CCCNA, the ERQ synod has been wrestling with questions related to the doctrine of creation. Three consecutive synods examined the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2, the confessional subscription of church officers, as well as various proposals for defending the truth of Scripture while preserving the unity of the Church. The synod in May 2014 adopted a proposal that would permit interpretations of Genesis 1 other than the strict six twenty-four hour days. Three motions, largely “borrowed” from sister churches who had already wrestled with the creation issue, were subsequently examined by the Ministerial Committee with a goal of setting limits to acceptable biblical interpretations in the ERQ. At our most recent synod meeting in February 2016, the three motions were adopted.
 - a. We adopted an affirmation summarizing the biblical and confessional teaching on creation. The text was adapted from the affirmation adopted by the URCNA synod in 2001, with modifications to reflect our subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith. We also removed the statement rejecting theistic evolution believing that an affirmation of our confession did not require a declaration on a scientific theory.
 - b. However, we did adopt a recommended series of questions for the examination of pastoral candidates and pastors transferring into the ERQ in which the examinee must refute the theory of evolution, as well as articulate the hermeneutical and theological rationale of his position. This examination procedure was taken over directly from the recommendation adopted by the 71st General Assembly of the OPC.
 - c. The ERQ synod also adopted the motion reminding the consistories to follow the church order with respect to the discipline of office bearers in case of heretical teachings.

Brothers, we covet your prayers as this issue is not yet laid to rest. The ERQ synod must still respond to a letter from one of our consistories requesting the synod to adopt the six-day interpretation of the creation act as the only acceptable confessional teaching. You are undoubtedly aware that our brother, Paulin Bédard, has written an extensive defense of this position in his book *In Six Days God Created*. While most of our office bearers

- hold to the six-days interpretation, the ERQ has historically permitted other interpretations. Pray that we might teach the truth of God in a spirit of love and unity.
- ii. We rejoice that the Head of the Church continues to raise up men of God to serve his people in Quebec. In January 2015, David Castonguay was ordained to the ministry of the Word and sacraments in order to serve the St-Jean congregation in Montreal, with a view to eventually becoming an army chaplain. Brother Castonguay is the first pastor of Quebec origin to be ordained in the ERQ in more than twenty-five years. Pastor Jean Zoellner accepted a call to serve as dean of Farel, Reformed Theological Seminary. Pastor Karis Mpindi, born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and raised in the United States, was received to serve the St-Jean congregation in Montreal. Three elders were ordained. One congregation of the ERQ remains vacant. This past Saturday May 14th, eight office bearers and sixteen un-ordained men spent the day learning about the call to serve the Church as pastors or elders. We pray that several of these men will eventually be called to serve the Church in Quebec.
 - iii. Two mandates accorded by the synod still await completion. The Education Committee has been mandated to write an official liturgy for the ordination of pastors and elders. The Ministerial Committee has presented a draft proposal for the examination process of men for the pastoral ministry as well as the reception of pastors from sister churches. Final reports should be forthcoming.
 - iv. The ERQ continues to develop fraternal relations beyond Quebec. We maintain ecclesiastical fellowship not only with the Canadian Reformed Churches, but also with the Presbyterian Church in American (PCA), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the United Reformed Church in North America (URCNA). In November 2105, the ERQ hosted the delegates of the thirteen member churches of NAPARC. We thank our Lord for the growing mutual awareness of our collective Reformed witness throughout North America.
 - v. The ERQ synod voted to support a music ministry under the oversight of our consistory in Charny. The musical team will produce educational material for teaching covenant children Biblical and catechetical truths through song. While the financial support has already been received, a severe concussion has prevented the principal music leader from composing new songs.
 - vi. Your synod recommends that the churches “support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects.”
 - a. We would encourage your continued support of the missionary agreement between the Canadian Reformed Church of Owen Sound and the ERQ of St-Georges. Your support enables brother Paulin Bédard to write and translate Reformed articles for the new website *Ressources chrétiennes*. Pastors and believers from Quebec, France and French-speaking Africa are regularly consulting the site.
 - b. We would also ask your congregations to consider supporting the special project of translating and publishing *The Covenant of Love* written by the late Rev. Clarence Stam. In 2013 the ERQ synod agreed to support financially a translation project under the oversight of the consistory of the St-Marc congregation in Quebec City. A translator has been contracted to translate Reformed books into the French language, as well as explore avenues for publication and distribution. *The Covenant of Love* would be a wonderful



resource to edify believers in our churches, as well as believers throughout the French-speaking world.

As we conclude this fraternal address, we would like to express our appreciation for the work of the CCCNA, for their regular visits to Quebec, and for their honest, brotherly exchanges. We also note with thanksgiving the growing contact between members of our respective federations. We frequently receive visitors from your members, and several youth and adults have participated in short-term mission projects in Quebec City and St-Georges. On the other hand, we would like to see more pulpit exchanges. If any of your pastors or teachers speak the language of John Calvin, we would appreciate receiving them to preach in our pulpits. Many of our pastors speak the language of Shakespeare and would welcome invitations to preach in your pulpits.

As you conclude the work of the general synod, and as you return to shepherding your local congregations, please be assured that we do pray for you and your faithful witness. May our gracious Lord fill us with joy as we preach the Gospel of truth and life.

With brotherly affection.

APPENDIX 15 – GKNvv: Letter of Greeting, with 2 appendices, from R. de Boer of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (temporary federation) (Agenda 8.3.1.1.20-22)

Esteemed Brothers,

On March 12, 2016, the delegates to the General Synod of the Reformed Churches Netherlands have decided to send you sincere brotherly greetings. From a distance we follow your deliberations and decisions. Much has been submitted to you such as the contacts with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. The LORD grant you wisdom and insight so that your decisions may be to HIS honour and a blessing for the churches in your federation as well as a blessing to Christ in HIS worldwide churchgathering.

On May 14, 2014, our deputies met with your subcommittee for foreign relations. Your subcommittee has submitted a report. We feel connected with you and trust that the proposal of your subcommittee to maintain a form of contact will be adopted. We will keep you informed of the developments in our churches. In that scope we include as appendix a letter from our Synod to the next Synod of the Reformed Churches (Restored) (DGK). The first steps to a dialogue of the GKN and the DGK have been taken. We trust that any hindrances can be resolved within a reasonable period of time and on good terms. For your information we also send you the press release of our General Synod.

We wish you the blessings of our LORD on all your endeavours.

With sincere brotherly greetings.

On behalf of the March 12, 2016, General Synod of the Reformed Churches Netherlands (GKN),

R. de Boer, Clerk

Appendix 1 to GKNvv letter

GENERAL SYNOD MARCH 12, 2016

GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN NEDERLAND (GKN)

(The Reformed Churches Netherlands) (RCNvv)

held in the Church Building Elim, Stakenberg 94, Ede.

PRESS RELEASE

OPENING

Rev. R. van der Wolf opens the Assembly on behalf of the convening church of Hardenberg, he requests the singing of Psalm 22 : 10 and 11, reads Matthew 26 : 30 - 46, and leads in prayer. He addresses the Assembly based on the Scripture reading and wishes all a good assembly. He also welcomes the brothers and sister in the general public.

All churches are lawfully represented. The churches of Assen – Boerakker and Dalfsen are represented by two delegates, the others by three. The agenda is adopted.

MINUTES AND CORRESPONDENCE

The minutes of the meeting held September 28, 2015, are approved and signed. The church of Hardenberg responds that it has not yet prepared a proposal for the guidance of theological students. With respect to the status as advisor of Prof. Dr. J. Douma it is decided that he will

always be invited as advisor to the assemblies of the GKN. Since he is unable to attend this assembly he has submitted written advice to the chairman.

A total of 40 letters with supplements have been received or mailed. The reading of these documents is deemed unnecessary. The Deputies Men, Women and Office of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) have requested the completion of a questionnaire – it is decided not to comply with this request.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Rev. J.R. Visser attends the GKN meeting for the first time. The chairman requests him to sign the Subscription Form for Ministers. After the reading of the form Rev. Visser signs the declaration. On behalf of the churches the chairman congratulates the church of Zwolle with her minister. He wishes Rev. Visser the Lord's blessing in the performance of his office and welcomes him in the midst of the churches.

GENERAL QUESTION PERIOD

The church of Kampen informs that the duties her minister, Rev. E. Hoogendoorn, have been diminished by 50 % due to semi retirement prior to full retirement. In due time the church of Kampen will inform the General Synod.

The General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches will be convened at Dunnville on May 9, 2016, the Lord Willing. The church of Zwijndrecht proposes to send brotherly greetings and blessings. The current Assembly adopts this proposal.

The proposal of the church of Zwijndrecht is adopted to inform the appellants to the Assembly of September 24, 2014, that the Assembly of September 20, 2015, has decided to file their appeals without further action.

The church of Zwijndrecht requests the churches to appoint a committee for contact with other denominations in The Netherlands. The Assembly has sympathy for the request but is of the opinion that the preparation of the request is insufficient. The church of Zwijndrecht is advised submit a completely developed proposal. Verslag Generale Synode 12 maart 2016-2

COOPERATION AND STRUCTURE

The Committee for Cooperation and Structure (CCS) has submitted a report with proposals to the churches. The CCS has first taken the time to reflect on the position and function of the Church Order (CO) in the church federation. It is important to gain a clear view of the meaning and intention of the CO and then to determine what is good and possible for the GKN. Consideration needs to be given to the articles which can be observed in the current circumstances, which partly and which not yet or not at all.

Subsequently the CCS has dealt with all other questions which were submitted. The CCS has used material which was submitted and reviewed previously as well as suggestions from the churches as far as applicable. The CCS report was dealt with in the presence of all committee members.

After discussion the Assembly decides to adopt the CCS proposals as follows:

1. The Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland will use the Church Order adopted by the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in 1978. The churches have adopted this CO and will apply

themselves to the provisions of this CO as long as they have not been changed by the General Synod.

2. As long as the church federation is small the GKN will have two ecclesiastical assemblies – the Consistory and the General Synod. All tasks and competences of the Classis and Regional Synod are assigned to the General Synod until it is possible to have Classes and Regional Synods.

3. As long as the federation is small the following CO articles will be adhered to as far as possible: art. 18, 28, 41, 45, 46. And as long as there is no theological college deputies will provide adequate guidance for theological students.

4. Current minor differences among the churches such the use of liturgical forms for public profession of faith and confirmation of marriages, the use of a number of hymns, as well as participation of women in the election of office bearers will not form a hindrance in the acceptance of each other as churches of Christ and the living together in the church federation.

From this time on the Assembly of the GKN will be known as the General Synod (GS).

As a rule the GS will be convened twice a year, in March and October. Each church shall delegate to the GS a minister and an elder, when a church is vacant two elders.

The executive of the GS will be delegated to a moderamen consisting of a preses [chairman], a clerk and an assessor elected from among the delegates. The regulation for the GS has been adopted.

It is decided to appoint a deputy clerk for a term of one year to take care of the activities of the convening church and to perform the other administrative duties of the GS. Outgoing mail will be signed by the clerk.

When the church federation reaches the number of ten congregations two Classes shall be formed. A Classis will be made up of at least four churches.

An Appeals regulation is adopted.

The description of the responsibilities of the church visitors as outlined in CO Art. 44 and the existing regulation is deemed sufficient.

The Assembly makes the following arrangements for neighbouring churches: Zwolle for Hardenberg, Hardenberg for Kampen, Kampen for Zwijndrecht, Zwijndrecht for Ede, Ede for Dalfsen, Dalfsen for Assen-Boerakker, Assen-Boerakker for Zwolle.

Finally it is concluded that it is not the responsibility of the churches in common to provide an inventory of available sermons for reading services.

Since this General Synod has adopted the proposals of the CCS it will be necessary to review and amend various existing regulations and presentations as well as the website so that they agree with the adopted proposals. The CCS is discharged from its current tasks with thanks and subsequently instructed to serve the next GS with proposals for needed amendments, appointments and the access to GS documents.

FINANCES

In the presence of the treasurer of the Financial Committee, br. B. Hoogendoorn, the report and annual financial statements 2015 as well as the 2016 budget are reviewed. The brothers H.P.C.

Bos and H. Hoek are appointed to audit the records of the treasurer. The 2016 budget and the assessment of \$60 per member are adopted. As proposed by the Financial Committee br. C.M. Blootens is reappointed for a three year term effective as of September 2015.

CHURCH ORDER Article 38

The Church of Zwijndrecht requests the approval to institute the offices at Ede in conformance with article 38 CO. The request for institution of the ward Ede – Veenendaal comes from the ward itself and is strongly supported by the members. The Assembly concludes that the process has been carefully prepared and discussed by the consistory with the members of the ward. The minister, Rev. E. Heres, will remain the minister of the church of Zwijndrecht. The church of Ede will be vacant. It is the intention that Rev. Heres will be the counsellor with extensive duties such as regular preaching and catechism teaching. The church of Ede will provide compensation to the church of Zwijndrecht as agreed upon. The Assembly approves the institution of the offices at Ede and the appointment of Rev. Heres as counsellor of Ede and surroundings. The congregations of Zwijndrecht and Ede are congratulated.

INITIAL MEETING with DEPUTIES of the REFORMED CHURCHES (RESTORED) (DGK)

Rev. J.R. Visser acts as the chairman for his part of the Assembly since Rev. Van der Wolf acts as spokesman of the Deputies who met with the DGK Deputies.

The GKN deputies have submitted their report in writing. They inform the Assembly that the DGK deputies are bound by the instructions of the DGK Synod and this impedes a free and fruitful discussion. Deputies advise this Assembly to send a letter to the next DGK Synod. The draft letter concludes with “As churches of the GKN federation we appeal to you to review the instruction of your predecessor to grant your deputies the opportunity to have an open discussion with us about the necessity and privilege to be truly catholic reformed today. To the praise of the LORD and the welfare of the churches.”

At the suggestion of the chairman, Rev. Visser, it is decided to deal with the report and advice in public session after an informative round in closed session.

The delegates are disappointed that the DGK instructions form a barrier to an open discussion since from the report it is evident that both sides have the intention, desire and willingness to continue the discussions. Various feelings and opinions are aired including the suggestion to request the DGK deputies to seriously attempt the earlier convening of the DGK Synod to deal with this matter since that is possible in the DGK instructions. The DGK deputies know themselves bound by their instructions which can only be revised by the DGK Synod and as GKN we cannot interfere in that responsibility. After a few minor additions the draft letter is adopted.

There will be no separate press release on this subject. Rev. Visser will respond to any questions, inquiries from the press and others.

CLOSING

The next General Synod will be convened on October 1, 2016, at the church building of Ede. Convening church will be Kampen. Censure Art. 48 CO is not necessary. The preses addresses words of appreciation to the delegates and deputies for their preparation, participation and

cooperation. The Church of Ede was thanked for her hospitality. After prayer and the singing of Hymn 22:3,4, and 7 the Assembly was closed.

Ermelo, March 16, 2016.

Appendix 2 to GKNvv letter: letter from GKNvv to DGK

[**Note:** In the following document the acronym ‘GKN’ refers to the GKNvv]

To: The General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands,
c/o The calling church DGK Berkel en Rodenrijs / Bergschenhoek,

RE: **Meeting**

Ede, March 12, 2016.

Dear brothers,

Preamble

GS Groningen of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (DGK) decided on February 7, 2015 to check on federation level "if there is a possibility to come to unity with GKN, where the starting point must be the truth God's Word and the case where it is carried out on the basis of God's Word." Your GS has therefore instructed your deputies ACOBB to make contact with the national meeting of the GKN. Of this decision, you have informed the churches of the GKN, by letter dated June 18, 2015. You have, in the same letter invited us as churches for a meeting, an open discussion "in order to examine whether we are actually on the same foundation, and based on that foundation also build the same building." The national meeting of the GKN dated September 26, 2015 received this invitation from deputies ACOBB (dated September 16, 2015) and subsequently responded positively and instructed their own deputies to conduct a preliminary discussion and report back to the meeting of the GKN. That conversation took place on January 28, 2016. The minutes of this conversation can undoubtedly be found in the report of your deputies ACOBB. In response to your decisions and the said conversation, we would like to answer you as follows:

Exploratory Conversation

During the meeting our deputies expressed their surprise about your invitation, which was indeed intended to introduce an "open discussion" to examine "whether we are actually on the same foundation, and if the same building is also build on that foundation." This surprise is twofold, as will be explained:

1. First, previous General Synods of your churches did rule out any contact with the churches of the GKN. The appointed deputies also did see no reason for contact until Groningen 2014. The intention of your predecessor Groningen 2014 was for our deputies hidden behind a report which was stated confidential and was therefore inaccessible to them, while the documents proved difficult to figure out the reason for the DGK to send an invitation. The discussion on this subject during our meeting was enlightening. Your deputies pointed out the hectic and actuality of that moment. It was still too early to engage in a conversation before Groningen 2014. Moreover, your deputies stated that deputies ACOBB were not able to complete their mission and instructions during the previous years, (due to time restraints). Brothers, we are grateful to hear



that the reasons to have no contact with the GKN in the period 2010-2015 was only due to the lack of time and priority. You write that quite generous in your letter of June 18, 2015. You state the following about our churches: “You want to stand on the same foundation of the apostles and prophets, and you want in your religious coexistence, focus as much as possible to the Reformed CO.” This recognition, made you obviously believe that contact should no longer be postponed.

2. Subsequently our deputies mentioned their surprise about the invitation, due to other decisions of Groningen 2014. The acts of this GS were not known by GKN deputies until the end of 2015, because they were not released for publication. Only after accepting the invitation and planned date and place, could GKN deputies study the instructions and regulations. Based particularly on your decision II.2. our deputies expressed their surprise about what should be an “open discussion” as mentioned in your letter to the GKN dated September 26, there could be no such thing from the side of your deputies considering their instruction. During the conversation your deputies confirmed clearly that they were indeed bound by these instructions. All mentioned agenda items were to be examined in time “to the bone” according to one of your deputies. But that would in the meantime not prevent an “open discussion” according to your deputies. Driven by an “ecumenical willingness” it should be possible. As such it is also stated in the Acts Groningen: “Also, with respect to a schismatic church which is based on the remainder of fundamental 2.a., the Church of Christ should, as far as possible, investigate whether there is unity in the truth.” On this point, we as GKN are grateful for the clear message the deputies conveyed during the meeting. It convinced our deputies that their surprise was justified indeed and it restricted the GKN to continue talking to your deputies. At the same time this made us address this letter directly to your meeting, because especially the latter does need some explanation.

Groningen 2014

Brothers, what the GS Groningen 2014 calls an “open discussion” and “in order to examine whether we are actually on the same foundation, and on that foundation also build the same building,” appears in its Acts to be a meeting in which you want to perform your calling regarding a so called “schismatic church.” The following considerations were taken into account by you:

- 2.b. Regarding managing the KO for religious coexistence within the federation, questions should be asked to the GKN with regards to the authority of major meetings (art. 35 KO) and the function of art. 31 KO and art. 67 KO.
- 2.c. In an, up to now, not revoked publication from 2010 (The reformation of the church and the gospel of free grace) that is still accessible on the web-site of GKN Zwolle, some statements raise questions with regards to the confession of the aforementioned basis. These statements include:
 - The doctrine of the church (BC Articles 27-29).
 - The authority of ministers and church meetings (BC Articles 30-32, Article 35 CO).
 - The doctrine of sanctification and union (BC article 24).
- 2.d. Several ministers of the GKN have shown a pluralistic church vision. Prof dr. J. Douma has also left space in publications for the theory of evolution and a different vision developed with regards to Sabbath-rest according to the 4th commandment.
- 2.e. In under 2.c. mentioned publication, the legality of the “liberation” in 2003 is called into question (see also the brochure “Weerlegging” on DGK Zwolle website). The same should be established for statements of rev. E. Hoogendoorn.

You require, as it turns out to investigate:

- 4.b. A discussion with the federation with GKN will, referring to the aforementioned, have to focus on the following questions (in the following sequence):
 1. Are we really on the same basis and does this basis function as such?
 2. Is there an acknowledgement of the “liberation” of 2003 and 2010 as the work of the Lord?
 3. Are we seeking the same religious coexistence on the basis of the Reformed Church Order and BC art. 28? Is there the commitment to unification with the DGK?
 4. To what extent were past schisms and suspensions lawful? And what are the consequences for DGK and GKN?

Your deputies have, received, prior to any meeting with deputies GKN the following 2 instructions for the agenda:

2. A preparatory committee should be appointed, after the first contact with brothers from the GKN has been established. The agenda of such committee should, from the side of DGK, at least address the following issues:
 - a. Establish fundamentally based differences with regards to issues such as:
 1. the doctrine of the church (Article 27-29 NGB);
 2. Living according to the Reformed Church Order, with reference to statements on the website GKN regarding:
 - i. authority of major meetings (art. 35 KO)
 - ii. functioning of art. 31 KO regarding appeals
 - iii. functioning of art. 67 relating to songs during worship;
 - b. schisms and suspensions;
 - c. tolerating false doctrine as is supported by Dr. H. F. Kohlbrugge and Prof. J. Douma;
 - d. discussing the legality of the “liberation” of 2003 as the work of the Lord;
 - e. determine if there is in the GKN definite willingness to reach unity with the DGK.

Letter and Spirit

Brothers, out of principle we answer with a clear “no” against this agenda and the topics to be raised according to Acts Groningen 2014 with regards to aforementioned subjects. We want, with love for our Lord Jesus and yourself, also explain why we state this firm “no.” We reject your agenda, because we are Reformed Churches and want to stay that way. The agenda that you submitted, focusses for the larger part on the intention of binding above the scripture related to your interpretation of the K.O., your actions in the past and your church tradition to date. Apart from what article 29 NGB is stating about the characteristics of the true church, you want to speak with us with respect to the basis of any divergence on coexistence to the Reformed Church regarding respective topics. Is that the basis of religious coexistence? Is the church not only built on the foundation of apostles and prophets? Indeed, on this “Petra,” Christ is building His church! You want to talk in your search for that foundation about schisms and suspensions. Is that, according to you, really the Church's foundation? You indicate that you want to ask for publications that you, unfounded label as false doctrine. Apparently you believe to date, that Reformed Churches do not tolerate any space towards their members, in terms of exegetical differences. Moreover, brothers, the question is, on what basis you would like to speak with us about the “doctrine” of Kohlbrugge? Is his “doctrine” the basis for religious coexistence within the GKN? Your agenda shows, from our point of view, a non-reformed need to check a federation against your own criteria. Against such a request we say, for Christ's sake, confidentially and convinced “no” brothers, not based on this criteria! This is not the route that



must lead to church unity. This shows us, on the contrary, a program that needs to be dealt with, in order to recognize your liberation and further building, to be recognized work of the Lord, before you can accept us. Your letter, as stated in your acts, expresses the spirit in which the Reformed churches throughout the history of ecclesiastical negotiations have distanced themselves. We only refer to said Acts Groningen 1978, Art. 139d. Your agenda limits up-front the bandwidth of the Catholic confession and believes and suggests ecclesiastical appointments on the same level as the word of God.

Appeal

There is much to say, in the first place from our own shared tradition. But on this basis we do not want to continue. Because brothers, we are concerned about you. We come from the same house. We share the same history. Do not let one of us isolate itself in creating its own house and own history. For it may be that the structure appears inadequate when the King returns. The same applies to the GKN. Therefore, we were given to each other and we also need each other. To hold each other and grow together. To ask for forgiveness for our failures and mistakes. To continue working on our salvation with fear and trembling. For if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. In that space the Lord Jesus gives us a place to live. The space of the church who loves His Word and preserves it. To love him, but where we are unprofitable servants. He is the Only Head that we recognize as churches. And so we would like to reach out and be one with you. In the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ. A disposition that teaches us to humble ourselves and to consider others better than ourselves. To search for space instead of denying each other that space. With this in mind we want to talk to you about the three characteristics of the true church. In order to listen to each other if the Word of Jesus Christ is kept: audible, visible and tangible. Everything else is secondary. We as churches within the context of the GKN boldly appeal to you, review the instructions from your predecessor. To give your deputies the opportunity to truly have an open discussion with us about the need and privilege also to be a catholic reformed today. Praise the Lord. Let it be for the salvation of the churches.

With brotherly greetings,
J.R. Visser, president
R. de Boer, secretary

APPENDIX 16 – Closing Address by Synod Chairman –the Rev. R. Aasman

Esteemed brothers in the Lord,

We have a lot to be grateful for. First of all, we give thanks to our heavenly Father who has given us life and salvation in his Son Jesus Christ, and has allowed us, vessels of clay, to do this work of Synod among the churches.

We give thanks to our wives, families, and congregations that have allowed us be far away – for some it was just time, but for many it was time and distance.

Thanks to the hosting congregation of Dunnville that has done an extraordinary job: preparations, billeting, meals, and refreshments at this synod. The organizing committee under the leadership of Cornell Feenstra has allowed the work of synod to proceed in an efficacious manner. We thank you so much. We also thank the Church at Dunnville for this wonderful building.

Thanks to the Rev. Ryan Kampen for assisting the first clerk in his work. A very special thanks to sr. Jane Oosterhoff who has been given no title but has tirelessly and efficiently done so much work for the members of synod. There is a wonderful Latin word for Jane and that is *factotum*—one who holds many jobs. Personally, I think Jane has shaved at least a day from the length of synod. Our wives thank you, Jane. We thank you.

Thanks to you brothers of synod for entrusting the four of us up here to be officers of Synod. Personally I have very much appreciated working with the Rev. Rob Schouten as vice chairman, the Rev. Karlo Janssen as first clerk, and the Rev. Eric Kampen as corresponding clerk. I will be candid: I have never seen a clerk able to keep up with the Acts of Synod and still participate so energetically in the discussion as our brother Janssen. That's a gift. I have also never seen the Rev. Kampen break down in uncontrollable laughter that had us all in stitches. And as for the Rev. Schouten, it was always nice to lean over and ask him, "What do you think, Rob? Is this germane?"

Thanks brothers for being so kind and cooperative with us even when we sometimes had to steer our way through some challenging moments. You have been patient with me. And that made my task very enjoyable. Thank you.

I have attended 7 synods, and have even been allowed to chair 3 of them. Each synod is remarkable and the events stick with you for the rest of your life. I remember Synod 1989 in Winnipeg where the Rev. Agema and I started off as two young "broekies." However Synod Dunnville will stay with me as an amazing synod where the brothers worked together in wonderful harmony. I include the fraternal delegates and the members of Dunnville. We have developed bonds that will continue to be a blessing. In our circles we will continue to meet from time to time. Our paths will cross. Our appreciation and understanding of one another will only make those meetings uplifting and productive. What a privilege to have this from the Lord.

We have something special for the church of Dunnville to give at least a token of our appreciation for all that you have done... [whereupon the Chairman presented the organizing committee, appointed by Dunnville, with a photo of a large, custom-made clock which, upon arrival, is to be placed in the foyer]. I heard that the last clock fell from the wall and broke. We ask that you hang this clock up carefully. It will be at least 50 years before you get another one from us.



Closing Remarks:

Brothers, we have worked together for 7 days. Much of our time was spent as advisory committees with 5 or 6 men in a room. A good amount of our time was spent in plenary session with 24 men together in meeting. On top of that, we have had fraternal delegates from churches with whom we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship from around the world. We have sat together for meals, and stood together sipping our coffees. Compared to other Synods, 7 days may not sound like much. But they were full days, days that required a lot of thinking, prayer, talking, and making decisions. We are not to be judged by our length of days or number of Acts at this synod. We have had to deal carefully and sadly with the developments of our sister churches in The Netherlands. Reflect again at having to say of your older sister: “you no longer hold to the authority of the Word of God.” That has consequences and we were careful to state them. It means that old friends or relatives coming from The Netherlands will require a special discussion with consistory if they come with an attestation and wish to become a member here, or attend the Lord’s Supper. We call that tough love. At the same time, we made our decisions and sprinkled our discussion with a clear prayer and hope that our sister churches will repent and take a direction that gives proper praise and glory to our God. There are more challenging matters that we have had to deal with... I will not mention them here. You know them.

At the same time there was so much reason for joy: we have reports of faithful sister churches here in Canada, in the US, and around the world. In a global culture that makes man, money, and sex the very centre of everything, there are churches that put God in the centre and strive for believers to be the true image of God in every aspect of life. In addition, speaking of joyful things, we deal with our beautiful *Book of Praise*, Bible translation, and our Theological Seminary.

I would like to close with the final words of Psalm 118:17-29.

In this psalm the author relates how the Lord has delivered him against all odds. As a man of faith who gives his life in thankfulness to the Lord, the psalmist now asks to enter Jerusalem and go to the temple. His intention is clear: he wants to share his story with the church and encourage them to trust in the Lord as well. The response is good. Fellow believers see that the psalmist was like a stone rejected by the builders, but has become the cornerstone. In other words, the enemy tried to destroy him, but his life was precious to God, and God has brought him safely to the temple to be an example to others. At this point the church community also asks God for salvation and they express their deep thanksgiving to him.

For our brothers and sisters in Old Testament times, and for us today as well, there is deep comfort knowing that when we are under attack, our faithful covenant God will not leave us on our own. Attack doesn’t have to be physical, as in the case of war or acts of terror. It can be bullying, depression, loneliness, or a broken relationship that results in bitterness or perhaps the silent treatment. It can be spiritual attack as we mentioned earlier. We may feel like the stone rejected by the builders – that is, worthless. But we can always rely on the Lord. We go to him in our prayer, and he is the Rock on whom we can always depend.

From our perspective today, Psalm 118 really lights up when we see that this is Jesus Christ’s song. The suffering of the psalmist is his suffering; he was surrounded and hemmed in from every side. He was the stone rejected by the builders – the priests and scribes. He died for us and was raised in glory to become the cornerstone on whom the church is built, and into which we are included as living stones. In him we can enter the gates of righteousness into the presence of



our God. Truly in Jesus Christ we can confess with thanksgiving the Lord is “good” and “his steadfast love endures forever!”

We have experienced the steadfast love of the Lord during the past week. We know that God loves us in his Son Jesus Christ. May we all continue to rejoice in the great blessings we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. He was rejected by men. But he has become the cornerstone of our lives!

APPENDIX 17 – CRCA: Letter from the Rev. A. Souman, convener of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad – Agenda 8.2.2

Esteemed brothers,

The CRCA wants to draw your attention to the fact that in our report regarding the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, recommendation 3.c inadvertently disappeared during the review process of the report.

Recommendation 3.c was (and still is):

“to send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCA in 2018.”

This is a recommendation which we included in the report for most of the other sister churches, and which also has been the practice for the last six years with regard to the FRCA.

We certainly recommend to continue this practice with regard to the FRCA.

We wish you the Lord’s blessings over your deliberation,

With brotherly greetings.,

APPENDIX 18 – CRCA-SRN: Report Appendix 1 – Agenda 8.2.3.2

Letter from GS-GKv 2016 Dear and esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Warm greetings in the name of our Lord!

The General Synod of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands received a letter from you, our sister-churches in Canada, with admonitions, dated May 20th 2013. We have also received comparable letters from other foreign sister-churches. As a General Synod we regarded all these letters of concern and admonition as certainly legitimate. Our rules for relations with sister-churches abroad specify that sister-churches ought to assist each other, as much as possible, in the maintenance, defense and promotion of the Reformed Confession in doctrine, church government, discipline and liturgy, and according to the stipulation of the last Synod of our churches regarding communication from Synod to Synod (and not between committees).

We appreciate the cordial tone of your letter. Our deep and long-lasting relationship, which you mention, is one we also continue to cherish. Therefore we are definitely receptive to the expressions of worried concerns which you communicate in your letter, which your delegates also communicated to us during the discussion at the Synod in a brotherly way. We would also like to let you know that the same worried concerns are also being expressed by members of our own churches here in The Netherlands.

Therefore we appreciate your letter as an expression of your love and care as sister-churches, genuinely concerned about the well-being and faithfulness of our churches in The Netherlands. It is our hope and prayer as well, that the CanRC and the RCN may stand side by side, remaining faithful to God until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, even when traditions may change and new circumstances may require new answers, we hope and expect that we can help each other to remain faithful to the Lord and His Word, as our common foundation.

You express, in particular, concern about the developments at the Theological University in Kampen, about which you already wrote to the Synod of Harderwijk, 2011. The response you received was, in your opinion, substantially insufficient. The Synod of Ede, 2014, asked the Theological University to provide us with a clear clarification and defense regarding publications about which you express concern. The substance of this clarification and defense was already known to prior Synods. Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde kerken in Nederland Ede 2014.

This had given the Synods confidence, regarding the appointments of brothers Paas and Van Bekkum to their teaching positions at the University, that they would hold to the infallibility, clarity, and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures in their scholarly work. We are glad that now you too have received this clarification and defense from the University (see appendix 4).

We also append a document that clearly outlines the responsibilities concerning the Theological University (see appendix 5 – in Dutch).

We understand from your letter that you do not believe it is legitimate to allow for any discussion about women holding church offices. We, on the other hand, think it is a sound Biblical and Reformed practice to regularly review our traditional positions on different subjects in the light of Scripture. In accord with this principle, we are calling for an examination of our doctrine and practice with respect to church offices, in order to find Biblical guidance regarding the service of women in the church.



You see a direct connection between apostolic instruction and the offices of minister, elder, and deacon as they are practiced in our churches. You characterize the totality of this official ministry as one of giving spiritual leadership, and therefore limited, by Scripture, to men. Our intention is precisely to investigate whether this connection can be drawn that directly, and whether church ‘office’ may be a broader concept than ‘giving authoritative leadership’. We also wish to investigate how we can do justice to the two dimensions taught by Scripture: that of the different responsibilities given by God to man and woman, as well as that of the equivalence of man and woman. We believe that such an investigation is certainly possible in a Reformed church, as long as arguments are based on Scripture.

Finally, you express concern about the ongoing relationship between our churches and the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC). In our view, you seem to ignore an increasing confessional development within the NRC, and the intention of the NRC to critically review the hermeneutical basis of their decision to allow female elders and pastors. This is a development which we clearly see, observing local NRC congregations criticizing other NRC congregations for unbiblical practices. This Biblical and Confessional life in NRC congregations has led to unity with RCN congregations at the local level.

Our Synod spent quite some time reading your letters and listening to the explanation of your delegates. According to many foreign delegates, the discussion at the Synod was a reassuring experience, with much recognition of our honest desire to be Reformed churches. We hope that this may also be the testimony of their reports, and the result of our attempt to address your concerns.

In the enclosed appendix you find the text of the reply of the General Synod to your concerns, a reply which was practically unanimously agreed upon. We hope you will carefully consider our reply with the same love and care which we see expressed in your letters.

It is our prayer that this letter and material will help to alleviate your concerns and may contribute to restoring mutual confidence in each other. We hope that we can continue to encourage each other to remain steadfast and faithful in the service of Gods Kingdom, according to the Reformed Standards. Let us trust the Lord, who, while expressing critical admonitions, continued to care for His seven churches in Asia Minor. May He keep your and our churches in his hand! Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde kerken in Nederland Ede 2014

May the Triune God bless you and keep you as churches, and may He keep us united in a sound sister-church relationship to the glory of His name.

On behalf of the general synod of Ede 2014,

Rev. R.J. Vreugdenhil, second scribe

Appendices:

nr. 2 Text of the synod’s decision about the different admonitions

nr. 3: Text of the synod’s decision about the M/V report

nr. 4: Account of the TU

nr. 5: Document on TU, GS and the churches (in Dutch)

nr. 6: Text of the synod’s decision about the Netherlands Reformed Churches (in Dutch)



Minutes the discussion in the synod – see: <http://www.gkv.nl/organisatie/generale-synode/acta-gs/612/>



APPENDIX 19 – CRCA-SRN: Report – Appendix 2 – Agenda 8.2.3.3

Decisions objections churches abroad (English)

Appendix 2: Decision ‘objections churches abroad’

Materials:

1. Letter of admonition from the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia in Armadale, 2012 (April 22, 2013) with 19 appendices.
2. Letter from the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Carman, 2013 (May 21, 2013).
3. Letter from the Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States (June 5, 2013).
4. Letter from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (December 6, 2013).
5. Letter from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (December 12, 2013).
6. Letter from the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad of the United Reformed Churches in North America (January 1, 2014).
7. Letter from the Deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia for Relations with Sister Churches (March 3, 2014) (supplement to Material #1).

The objections voiced in the letters may be arranged and summarized as follows:

1. Objections to TUK publications:

The publications by K. van Bekkum (historicity of the Scripture), S. Paas (idem), J.J.T Doedens (exegesis Genesis 1/2) and A.L.Th. de Bruijne (hermeneutics) are cited. Also cited are statements made by G. Harinck (Scripture and homosexuality).

It is noted that successive general synods of the GKv did not deal with these objections. The GS Zwolle-Zuid (2008) referred to the fact that the Board of Supervision dealt with these objections. Moreover, with respect to A.L.Th. de Bruijne, reference was also made to the consistory of Rotterdam-C. An appeal on the grounds of art. 31 of the Church Order was also judged to be unfounded. According to the writers of the letter, a historical-critical approach to the Bible will lead to an acceptance of Scripture-critical scholarship within the TUK and will, in the long term, result in a decreased appreciation of the authority and accuracy of the Word of God among newly trained ministers.

Furthermore, the writers of the letter are concerned about the manner in which the GKv is “dealing with hermeneutics”. This is a recurring point of concern with regards to the report M/F and various synodical decisions, such as those concerning marriage and divorce. See next point for more.

2. Objections to decisions made by general synods and the contents of deputy reports:

- a. The GKv allow for "a speaking of the Holy Spirit that is not within the boundaries set by the Word of God and that is not based on clear biblical regulations", thereby detracting from the perfection of the Holy Scriptures. On this point the report of the Deputies Ecclesiastical Unity mandated by the GS Harderwijk is cited.
- b. The same concern is voiced with regards to a "new manner of practicing ethics", in which "the style of the kingdom" is employed as the directive framework when it comes to judging

situations in cases of divorce and re-marriage. This manner of dealing with the matters is viewed as subjective and as a departure from literal Biblical regulations.

c. The study concerning the question whether Scriptures leaves room for women to fulfill an office is in direct contradiction to the clear Biblical doctrine the special offices are reserved for men only (1 Tim. 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 14:33-35; also Belgic Confession art. 30). The manner in which the report speaks of the meaning of culture also leads to a disempowerment of the exclusive authority of the Bible. Especially the use of hermeneutics in the report raises grave concerns and worries to a number of sister churches. The fear is that this opens the door to toleration of many other matters within the churches. Furthermore, there is great concern about the statement in the report that the clear revelation of Scripture (namely that only men should be ordained) may be seen as one option alongside various other opinions. The churches have the responsibility to disciplinary action against those who have these views and promote this kind of approach to hermeneutics.

d. The broadening of the rules concerning the local ecclesiastical unity with a Dutch Reformed Church (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerk), approved by the GS of Amersfoort-Centrum (2005) and Zwolle-Zuid (2008). The NGK allows women in office and are investigating the admission of practicing homosexuals into the offices; the churches tolerate a looser binding to the confessions. This unity with the NGK will lead to the undermining of the authority of Scripture.

e. The GS Zwolle-Zuid decided to take part in the “Nationale Synode”, thereby promoting a false ecumenism.

f. The ongoing addition of new songs to the songbook, many of which are not Biblical and Reformed.

g. The omission of the old Article 31 CO in the revised Church Order. Although the new church order leaves room for objections on the basis of personal conscience, it is no longer possible for churches not to ratify decisions if these are deemed contrary to the Scripture or the Church Order. This is in conflict with the autonomy of the local churches as confessed and upheld in the Reformation of 1944.

h. Some churches have indicated that they will review their sister church relationship or the existing correspondence if the GKv does not decisive distance itself from a Scripture-critical theology and does not clearly reject the report M/F.

Decision 1:

to treat the letters with objections by these sister churches abroad as letters received, addressed to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Liberated).

Grounds:

1. In this way these sister churches have expressed their concerns. The synod takes note of this in view of the nature of the existing relationships with these sister churches: *The churches shall, as much as possible, assist each other in the maintenance, defence, and promotion of the Reformed confession, in accordance with Scripture, in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy* (Rules concerning the maintaining of sister church relationships, GS Ommen 1993).

2. The General Synod is the only, and as an extension of the sister church relationships also the only correct address to which these sister churches can direct their concerns. The sister churches may expect the Synod to deal with these objections, especially in light of the fact that the GS of Harderwijk stated that foreign sister churches should direct any objections to the general synod (Acts of synod Art. 87, desicion 3).

Decision 2:

a. to express that:

1. the concerns of these sister churches are appreciated as sympathetic expressions of our unity in Christ Jesus;
2. that the Reformed Churches are, and wish to remain, accountable for adherence to the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions;
3. that today's Reformed Churches, although no longer the same churches as forty years ago, but are not less Reformed;
4. that the differences of opinion regarding certain authors, or regarding (parts of) reports by deputies, should not be blown up to objection against "the Reformed Churches"

Grounds:

1. The Reformed Churches are living churches existing in a rapidly changing ecclesiastical context in the Netherlands. The views on contacts with other churches, the role of the church federation (e.g. the need for uniformity within the federation), the task of the churches in society, and the necessity to present the gospel in a way that is relevant for today, are unmistakably different than in the eighties of the last century. The churches are finding their way in these matters that is deliberately in line with the Scripture and with the Reformed confessions. This way is not infallible and requires constant alertness. In this context the expression of the concerns by the sister churches is welcomed.

2. The Reformed Churches may be asked to give account for decisions made collectively, but not for various views of people or deputies for which the churches have not accepted responsibility.

b. to express about the concerns and objections mentioned in 2, on basis of our unity in Jesus Christ:

1. that the charge that the Reformed Churches allowed for a speaking of the Holy Spirit that is not within the boundaries set by the Word of God and that is in contradiction of clear biblical regulations, thereby detracting from the perfection of the Holy Scriptures, is not substantiated by the evidence that has been presented;

Ground:

The given quotation, taken from the report of the Deputies Ecclesiastical Unity, is about finding a way in the Christian life, which largely consists of decision-making for which there are no immediate biblical regulations, but in which God's children can "walk with the Spirit". The connecting of this quotation to other discussions, such as that of the grounds for divorce, is untenable.



2. that the ethical reflection on “the style of the kingdom”, by connecting main themes in Scriptural data, precisely intended to do more justice to biblical data than is done merely by working with individual Biblical statements.

Ground:

The appeal to “the style of the kingdom” does not introduce a new category, from outside of the Bible, to the discussion on ethical reflection, but simply treats important biblical data comprehensively. Just as in the appeals to the doctrine of “the covenant”, it focuses the attention on the unity of the Biblical message.

3. a. that as yet no decisions have been made by the General Synod about the report presented by the deputies M/F, and that the concerns voiced by the sister churches will be included in the discussion;

b. that no hermeneutics is legitimate in which the context of the Bible or the context of the modern reader either (i) plays *no* role, or (ii) plays an *autonomous* role in the exposition and application of texts.

Ground:

It is good to address the concerns of the sister churches already before the treatment of the deputy report M/F, by a framework statement about hermeneutics. This statement does not involve a detailed, technical decision concerning hermeneutics, but delineates the boundaries of that discussion within the churches: no one wishes to operate outside of these boundaries. Because there are concerns that this may have happened, it is appropriate to make a clear statement to this effect.

4. a. that the concerns about the talks with the Dutch Reformed Churches (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken), do not do justice to the agreement reached, on various subjects, by the Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity and the Committee for Contact and Cooperation (see the Reports of the Deputies Ecclesiastical Unity from the previous synods on this point);

b. that the General Synod has not yet decided about the report presented by the Deputies Ecclesiastical Unity, and that the concerns voiced by the sister churches will be included in the discussion.

5. that the “Nationale Synode” is a discussion forum, involving activities in which the Reformed Churches could possibly take part, taking into consideration the distinct identity and responsibility of the Reformed Churches (decision May 9th of this year);

6. a. that the increase in the number of songs in the Reformed songbook has, until now, taken place in accordance with the existing regulations designed to preserve the Reformed character of the worship services (GS 1999 art. 58; GS 2008 art. 64);

b. that also when other songs are used, the responsibility for the worship services lies with the local consistory, which in turn is held accountable through the regular ecclesiastical procedures (Church Order 2014, C37.1, F73 f.f.)

7. that the objection to the omission of article 31 CO is based on an interpretation of the article that has no longer been in force since the 1978 edition of the church order; in the exceptional situation that a church council feels unable to implement a synodical decision, the normal way is to give an account to the classis.

Ground:

The interpretation of Article 31 in the context of the so called right of ratification, as defended, for example, by P. Deddens in his “De ratificering der besluiten van meerdere vergaderingen” [Ratification of the decisions of various assemblies] (1946) was challenged by J. Kamphuis in his “Kerkelijke Besluitvaardigheid” [Ecclesiastical Decisiveness] (1970) and no longer in force in the Reformed Churches. The adoption of the Church order 2014 has not changed this.

Decision 3:

- a. to instruct the Board of Trustees of the TU to provide the synod with a concept response to the criticism submitted by the sister churches abroad of the publications by instructors and researchers at the TU. This response should take the form of a generous exposition, accessible to a broad audience, and it should address the individual publications.
- b. o advise the Board of Trustees to strive for the TU’s involvement in the continuation of the scientific dialogue with theologians connected to the churches that expressed their objections.

Grounds:

1. The Board of Directors supervises the Reformed character of the education and research at the TU and is primarily responsible for responding to objections raised against it (Constitution of the TU).
2. Objections submitted in the past have been refuted, but the communication of this refutation was possibly not sufficiently broad.
3. For the relationship with the sister churches, it is important to maintain a good exchange in the theological field, as recently happened at the Hamilton conference on hermeneutics.

Decision 4:

to urge the sister churches abroad to keep serving us and each other as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world.

Grounds:

1. Insofar our churches wish to remain in the confession of God’s Word there is no reason to review the existing contact.
2. Insofar our churches are increasingly dealing with the continued secularization in the lives of God’s children, we have much need of the support and forbearance of our sister churches abroad.

APPENDIX 20 – CRCA-SRN: Report – Appendix 3 – Agenda 8.2.3.4**Decisions of the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Ede 2014 concerning**

‘Man and women in the church’ *authorized translation*

(Material: see the original Dutch version)

Decision 1:

to relieve the committee “m/f in the church” of their duties.

Decision 2:

a. not to agree with the grounds of the conclusion of the committee “m/f in the church” that it belongs within the bandwidth of what may be called Scriptural and Reformed, when beside men women may also serve in the ecclesiastical offices;

b. the view that beside men women may also serve in the ecclesiastical offices must be open for free debate, provided that arguments are based on Scripture.

Ground:

the message of Scripture shows two lines. One line is that of equivalence of man and woman; the other is that of the difference in responsibility that God gave to man and woman. Both lines must be accounted for.

Decision 3:

a. to appoint a new committee “m/f and office” to investigate:

1. how the offices can be structured so that women can be active for God’s kingdom within that structure; thereby taking into account the ground mentioned under Decision 2;

2. what the consequences are of such a structure, relative to the current forms and the church order;

3. what the opinions are within sister churches concerning the implementation of the offices of minister, elder, and deacon; this with a view toward maintaining the catholicity of the church;

b. to inform the sister churches, both nationally and internationally, concerning this Decision 3, and to request advice.

Grounds:

1. a continuing reflection on the questions concerning men and women in the offices of minister, elder, and deacon will be served by a critical study of the current structure of offices within the Reformed Churches in the light of the whole teaching of Scripture;

2. the structure of offices originating in the times of the Reformation, of ministers, elders, and deacons, is not directly derived from Scripture and may therefore be modified and/or extended according to circumstances;

3. not all activities of the current officers deal directly with bearing responsibility for the spiritual leadership in the congregation; it is profitable to investigate which tasks may be executed by men as well as women;



4. a different implementation and definition of the offices of minister, elder, and deacon may have consequences for the content of the forms in current use, as well as for the rules of the church order;
5. according to the rules for sister church relations (Synod of Ommen, 1993), sister churches ought to be informed about the intended study and its results.

Decision 4:

to appoint a new committee “m/f in the church” with the following duties:

- a. to work on integration of Biblical education, the confessional norms, and the practice of the Reformed Churches in connection with the roles and functions of women and men in their mutual relations, by:
 1. describing actively how and on what ground in Reformed Churches men and women in various situations use their talents in the congregation;
 2. noting in connection to this strong points, best practices, but also difficulties and points of controversy, giving a first assessment of these matters, and communicating this to the churches;
 3. entering and remaining in conversation about these observations and considerations with especially the employees of the Theological University and the Praktijkcentrum;
 4. stimulating and supporting the conversation in the churches about the calling and right of women also to use their talents, with a view toward a practice that reflects the manifold message of the Scripture, with special attention to:
 - a. Scriptural and obedient reading of the Bible;
 - b. the influence of society on the thought and actions of Christians;
 - c. the special and complementary differences between man and woman.
 5. in all the aforementioned activity, specifically asking about the various experiences and convictions of women.
 - b. if there are developments in the churches in this respect that converge sufficiently, so that it is responsible to make general decisions, to submit proposals to the next general Synod;
 - c. to communicate relevant proposals to sister churches, both national and international, though the Contact Committee.

Grounds:

1. at this moment it is wise not to settle for one or more of the submitted “directions toward a solutions” in the questions surrounding potential female office bearers, but to continue the discussing more broadly;
2. the developments in the churches concerning the roles and functions of men and women in the congregation deserve good support and interaction;
3. the different practices in the churches today require a more communal process of raising awareness and learning from one another. This is felt more urgently today than in the past.
4. by investigating one another’s practices, as churches together and in mutual relationship, we complement each other and grow in unity;



5. input from the Theological University and the Praktijkcentrum is necessary for a theologically and empirically responsible guidance of the ecclesiastical developments and preparation of potentially necessary decision-making;
6. regardless of the conviction concerning the permissibility of female office bearers, much can be gained in a continued conversation about the calling and right of women also to use their talents in the church:
 - a. there is difference of opinion about the way in which we draw conclusions for our lives today from what the Biblical authors initially wrote for their audiences;
 - b. the committee “m/v in the church” in their report rightly noted the tension that many experience between the roles and functions that women fulfill in the churches and in society;
 - c. the real differences between man and woman demand its own consideration, for instance by giving attention to “gender studies”;
7. in the discussion about the calling and right of women also to use their talents in the churches their own input is indispensable;
8. it is good to take time to allow general decision-making to come up out of the churches, and to allow as much like-mindedness as possible to grow;
9. the agreements with sister churches, both national and international, must be honored as carefully as possible.

APPENDIX 21 – CRCA-SRN: Report – Appendix 4 – Agenda 8.2.3.5**Appendix 4****Theological University: response to foreign sister-churches***1. General*

In this document the Board of Trustees (BoT) of the Theological University in Kampen (TUK) seeks to fulfill the request of the Synod of Ede, 2014, to formulate a response to the criticism from our foreign sister-churches concerning publications by lecturers and researchers at the TUK. In its request, the Synod stated that this response should take the form of an extensive exposition, accessible to a broad audience, and that it should address the various letters which have been sent. By foreign sister-churches are meant the Reformed Church in the United States, the Canadian Reformed Churches, and the Free Reformed Church of Australia. We gladly comply with this request.

The Synod of Armadale, 2012, of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia mentions in its letter dated April 22, 2013, the names of Dr. K. van Bekkum, Dr. S. Paas, Rev. J.J.T. Doedens, Dr. A.L.Th. de Bruijne, and Dr. G. Harinck. These brothers were also mentioned in the letters from other foreign sister-churches in the past few years, in connection to objections to publications by TUK lecturers. Most of these objections have been replied to in the past. The General Synod of Ede, 2014, judged it important to address the issues raised by the foreign churches, and to give a clarification concerning the way these objections have been addressed. The BoT desires to cooperate in this endeavor, but also wants to emphasize that this clarification cannot provide legitimate grounds to reopen a procedure concerning matters that have been addressed in the past. The purpose of this letter is to give a clear description of how the objections have been handled, and how, according to our firm conviction, they have been answered adequately. The BoT wants to give a description that is clear to all, and the BoT also hopes that the foreign sister-churches will come to the conclusion that the churches in The Netherlands, and in particular the Theological University in Kampen, have handled the criticism of the past fourteen years with integrity and thoroughness. Since the beginning of the discussions about these matters, the brothers involved have also made new and significant contributions to the development of Reformed theology. The paragraphs that follow discuss: 2.1. the appointment of Dr. S. Paas; 2.2. the dissertation and appointment of Dr. K. van Bekkum; 2.3. Rev. J.J.T. Doedens; 2.4 Prof. Dr. G. Harinck; and 2.5. Prof. Dr. A.L.Th. de Bruijne.

2.1 The Appointment of Dr. S. Paas

The letter from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, mentioned above, states that, although many serious objections to the dissertation and appointment of Dr. S. Paas had been made, these objections were never addressed by a Synod, and that for solely formal reasons. But this assessment can be shown to be incorrect. In a letter dated March 26, 2012, we explained to the Canadian Reformed Churches how the Synod of Harderwijk, 2011, and the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors dealt with the objections. The letter was a response to the letter of the Canadian Reformed Churches of March 9, 2011. In line with the letter of March 26, 2012, we make the following statement:

The appointment of Dr. S. Paas as lecturer at the university was discussed at the General Synod of Harderwijk, 2011. No objections to this appointment had been submitted to the Synod, but at

the request of the moderamen of the General Synod, the Board of Trustees presented an additional confidential report, which addressed the main considerations in the appointment of Dr. S. Paas as lecturer at the university. We highly value a good relationship with the churches in Canada and with the sister seminary in Hamilton, but it would be asking too much to give you access to a confidential report written only for the Synod.

As Board of Trustees and Board of Directors we believe we should give you a response to some of the key points.

1. First it must be noted that Stefan Paas received his doctorate from the University of Utrecht. His dissertation was written according to the guidelines of that institution. He received his doctorate in 1998, many years before he was appointed in Kampen. The grounds for his appointment in Kampen included his publications in the field of missiology, which were all written after his dissertation. The dissertation of Paas is a contribution to the field of the history of religion, rather than theology (even though his doctoral study took place in the Department of Theology). In this work he opposes, on history-of-religion grounds, the common Higher Critical view concerning the historical origin of belief in God as Creator in Israel. At the request of the Board of Trustees, the Kampen Old Testament professor, Prof. Dr. G. Kwakkel, addressed the various issues that could be raised about this dissertation. In doing so, he concluded that Paas had written his dissertation within the framework of the academic study of the history of religion, without making explicit his personal faith commitment. He has done the latter in other publications, which shows clearly that he is willing to be guided by the language of Scripture. Paas declared that Kwakkel's articles give a fair representation of his position. Naturally, Paas's choice for a purely history-of-religion approach is open to criticism, but given this approach and his explicit justification of it, there is no ground for the accusation of adhering to Higher Critical theories. On the contrary, one should appreciate his courage to show, in a Higher-Critical setting, and in a manner acceptable to Higher Critical scholars, that Israel's belief in God as Creator is much older than is generally claimed by such scholars.

2. The failure to adequately take into account the context within which Paas wrote his dissertation, and the limited scope of the focus of his study (that is, the prophets, not the Torah), is evident in some of the objections raised to the way in which Paas speaks about the historicity of the Exodus and the conquest of Israel in the book of Exodus. On the basis of texts that are generally regarded as old, and archeological digs, Paas concludes that there are good reasons to view the Exodus as an historical event. He did not subject the Biblical texts about the Exodus to historical analysis, and therefore did not cast any doubt on them either. Rather, he wanted to contribute to the defense of the historical reliability of the Old Testament at one specific point, namely the dating of the conceptions of God as the Creator.

3. The same can be said for language about God in Israel. The thesis that "Yahweh was probably a branching off from the Canaanite king-god El" is supposedly in direct contradiction of God's self-revelation in his Word. Paas's treatment of this matter in his dissertation is the maximum which an academic historian of religion is able to say on the basis of the principles and methods of this field of study. It says nothing about the theological issue as to whether Yahweh really is the one true God, and whether He always has been that. Every orthodox Bible believer affirms that God is the only true God, and Paas does the same in heartfelt faith. Nor does it say anything about the issue as to what the *historical* process may have been. Rather, it only speaks to what people believe they can say *within the framework of a specific methodology, with all its limitations*. History-of-religion research deals with religion, not with God. In his dissertation,

Paas adopts the scientific jargon common among the academic audience for whom he wrote this work.

4. You write: “We would have expected that as a Reformed scholar he would have stated clearly that although he does not adhere to the religion-historical approach, he will use this approach in order to show that even on the basis of those presuppositions one can defend a creation belief in eight century prophets.” (p. 3) The point is that this is precisely what Dr. Paas wanted to do, according to his own testimony. He wrote this even more emphatically in the revised and translated version of his dissertation in 2003, in which (among other things) he forcefully criticizes the literary-critical method. One may debate whether Paas should have made this more explicit in 1998 within that context, but from his own declaration it is perfectly clear that this was his objective. Naturally, he could not have known what role his dissertation would play in the later discussions in the GKv (of which Paas is not a member), and with what questions in mind people would read his dissertation many years later. The context of his dissertation and the people for whom he wrote are entirely different from the context of the later debate surrounding his dissertation in the GKv and its sister churches.

5. On p. 5 you also mention the article by Paas in *Wapenveld*. In the context of his appointment, we had a thorough discussion with Paas about this. This conversation showed to our satisfaction that Dr. Paas wants to understand Scripture according to God’s intention, also concerning Genesis 1 and 2. That does not remove the possibility of disagreement about the concrete way he does this in this article. Such disagreements have always existed among orthodox Reformed theologians.

The Board of Trustees and Board of Directors concluded that the Theological University in Kampen had welcomed in Dr. Paas a valuable lecturer, who has deep reverence for the Scripture as the Word of God, and who knows himself bound to the Reformed Confession. By opposing Higher Critical theories on their own turf he actually supported scholarship that is faithful to the Bible.

In addition to this letter from 2012, the BoT emphasizes that the Synod of Harderwijk, 2011, deliberated in closed session about the objections to the appointment of Dr. S. Paas, which had been raised in letters to the BoT as well as in public articles. The clarification and defense of the BoT and BoD concerning this matter was approved by the Synod as part of the reports from the Theological University. In this way justice was done to the objections coming from the churches, and at the same time to Dr. Paas, who in 2008 was appointed by the Board of Directors.

2.2. *Dissertation and appointment of Dr. K. van Bekkum*

The letter dated April 22, 2013, from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia also mentions the 2010 dissertation of Dr. K. van Bekkum, as well as his 2011 appointment as lecturer at the university by the Synod of Harderwijk. The BoT points out that Prof. Dr. H.G.L. Peels, professor of Old Testament at the Theological University in Apeldoorn, had previously published a very favorable review of this dissertation in *Theologia Reformata*.¹³ This document of the BoT focuses on the way in which the university and the churches have dealt with Van Bekkum’s dissertation and his subsequent appointment. In the aforementioned letter of March 26, 2012, to

¹³ H.G.L. Peels, *Bijbeltekst, geschiedenis en archeologie* [Bible text, history, and archeology] in *Theologia Reformata*, vol. 54, issue 3, 306-314.

the Canadian Reformed Churches, the BoT and BoD also addressed this matter, and in line with this letter we would like to say the following:

In your letters you also make some remarks concerning the dissertation of Dr. K. van Bekkum. In particular, you write that the distinction Van Bekkum makes between a "truth claim" and a "truth value" "does not reflect a high view of Scripture and should be rejected."

For the sake of clarity: a Board of Trustees of a university does not evaluate dissertations; neither does the Curatorium. The scholarly evaluation belongs to the thesis committee and the university senate. This includes the assessment as to whether the dissertation fits into the confessional framework of the university. In academic publications discussions are held about the results of academic investigations and methodological principles. Dissertations defended in Kampen must likewise be able to stand the test of such academic criticism. Hypotheses and models that are defended can also be attacked in that academic debate. The articles about Joshua 10:12-14 by E.A. de Boer and P.H.R. van Houwelingen, which you mentioned, were not published in an academic journal, but are illustration of a discussion that may be had about results of academic investigation. On a side note, they also state that Van Bekkum does not deny that God performed a miracle in response to Joshua's prayer.

The BoT and the Curatorium seek to be informed about the criteria and principles used by the supervisor of a dissertation and the senate of the university. To respond your questions concerning the dissertation by Dr. van Bekkum, we include in this letter the statement by his supervisor, professor of Old Testament Dr. G. Kwakkel:

1. At the core of Reformed theological study of the Bible—in agreement with the Bible passages quoted by the Canadian brothers as well as Belgic Confession, art. 3-7—is the question, "What does the text mean?" What do the texts intend to say? Following the Old Testament scholar Long, you can formulate this as the question regarding the "truth claim": what exactly is the "truth" the text "claims" to communicate? This comes with the question of the nature of the "truth claim"; for instance: does the text intend to communicate a historical or ethical truth, a combination of those, or perhaps something else? That question, regarding the content and nature of the "truth claim," you may discuss together as long as you want, as long as you are willing to listen carefully to the texts.
2. For me as a Reformed theologian it is *a priori* evident that anything belonging to the actual truth claim of the Scripture must therefore be received as true, directive, and normative, because God himself teaches it to us. In that respect a discussion about the "truth value" is really no longer necessary, for I assume from the start that the "truth claim" is correct.
3. Still, in some cases it can be useful to investigate this "truth value" after all, for instance by comparing the Scripture's testimony about historical data to the results of archeological research. Regarding this additional research, for example, in a dissertation, I do not need to convince myself of the factual "truth value" of the concrete text of Scripture. Its use is of a different nature and twofold:
 - a. In a discussion with others who do not share my *a priori* convictions concerning the "truth value" of a text, I can show them, to some extent, that there is more support for this "truth value" than they think. This is what Van Bekkum does in his dissertation. Or, if I fail to say more about the "truth value," I realize even more that I really take Scripture and nothing else as my starting point, and that therefore faith is truly the only, all-decisive factor.

b. A potential *occasion* to check my view concerning the nature and content of the “truth claim.” For instance, if it appears that archeology presents a very different picture from what I think the Bible text presents, then I do well to check once again whether I have really understood the intention of the Bible text. If so, then I make peace with the (for me) unresolvable difference between Bible text and extra-Biblical academic research. If not, then I am grateful for my increased understanding of the Scripture. But in all this it remains so that I believe and accept the claims of Scripture “for their own sake,” not on the basis of other evidence. (Here ends the statement by Prof. Dr. G. Kwakkel.)

As has been stated before, the BoT of the TU does not evaluate dissertations; nor do the churches at their Synod. The academic evaluation belongs to others. The BoT considers the statement above of Prof. Kwakkel a sufficient answer to the objections from the churches, in particular on the matter of the authority of Scripture and the relationship between what Scripture says and the results of archeological research.

A separate point of interest is the appointment of Dr. K. van Bekkum as university lecturer on the Old Testament. An appointment at the TU in Kampen follows a certain procedure, in which the evaluation of the Curatorium is also asked. In this situation, in part because of some critical reviews of the dissertation, there was a conversation between the Curatorium and Dr. K. van Bekkum, which also concerned his dissertation. This conversation resulted in a positive advice from the Curatorium to the Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees regarding the planned appointment at the Synod of Harderwijk, 2011.

Our conclusion is that the Synod itself did not give an elaborate assessment of the objections from the churches. These objections were not on the agenda of the Synod, either. But in the entire process leading up to the appointment by the Synod, careful consideration was given to the objections that had been published. In the closed session at Synod, the BoT gave an account of this; the Synod subsequently approved the plans of the BoT.

Additionally, Van Bekkum interacted extensively with expressed criticism early in 2014, with the approval of the Board of Directors.¹⁴

2.3. J.J.T. Doedens

The name of Rev. J.J.T. Doedens is brought up regularly. In 2002 he published the article *Taal en teken van trouw, over vorm en functie van Genesis 1* [Speech and sign of faithfulness: on the form and function of Genesis 1.] The article is part of *Woord op schrift: Theologische reflecties over het gezag van de bijbel*. [Word inscriptured: theological reflections on the authority of the Bible.] At the time of publication, the Curatorium established that Rev. Doedens was not connected to the TU, so that the Curatorium had no responsibility for this publication.

Individual church members did try to obtain an ecclesiastical decision. The Synod of Zwolle-Zuid, 2008, declared the letter of objection to be inadmissible. Grounds for this decision can be found in the Acts of Zwolle-Zuid, 2008, Art. 54.

2.4. Prof. dr. G. Harinck

In your letters you mention the name of Prof. Dr. G. Harinck, in connection with a number of statements in the press about a controversial approach to Scripture dealing with homosexuality. These statements were made in a radio interview with Dr. G. Harinck, part of which was

¹⁴ <http://oud.tukampen.nl/uploads/documents/389.pdf>. Also published in *Lux Mundi* 33.2 (2014), 44-50.

published in the *Nederlands Dagblad* of January 26, 2008. On February 6, there was a conversation between Prof. Harinck and all those involved with his position as professor. This resulted in a declaration, which was also published in the *Nederlands Dagblad*. The BoT includes the second part of this declaration in this letter:

The Bible

In the conversation about dealing with the Bible and the way in which Reformed Christians use the Bible, Dr. Harinck declares that he certainly acknowledges the normative character of God's Word and the force of specific texts. This applies both to living with trust in the Lord, and to theological and ethical reflection. His comments on the Bible passages that deal with women were not meant as a personal hermeneutic, but as a reflection of his personal position in this matter. Earlier in his life he had arrived at an opinion about "woman and church office" on the basis of Scripture. Naturally this involves more than the one text he mentioned in the interview. He wanted to say that he is personally not interested in revisiting that kind of debate, with a repetition of mostly the same arguments. Although he has his own view, he accepts that in the churches to which he belongs women cannot be office bearers. As for the male homosexual friendships that Dr. Harinck called unobjectionable, he declares that he meant a relationship of friendship, and not a relationship comparable to that between a man and a woman. On this point, Dr. Harnack agrees, the Bible clearly rejects homosexual behavior.

Roman mass

In the conversation about "partaking" in a Roman Catholic mass, Dr. Harnick states that he did not mean participation in the Eucharist, but rather visiting a Roman Catholic service. "If that is convenient," he added in the interview, referring to a situation where it is impossible to attend a different church service.

Careless

Initially the university understood the interview very different than Dr. Harinck intended, according to his later explanation. They were not the only ones. Some reactions to the interview were quite disturbed and vehement. Under pressure of these reactions Dr. Harinck wrote his further explanation in the paper of February 5.

The next day a conversation took place in Kampen, in which we spoke to one another in a vigorous but brotherly manner. By means of this candid discussion, we found one another in our love for the Word of the Lord and for the churches. In this setting Dr. Harinck acknowledged that his careless formulations and lack of consideration of the ecclesiastical context had led to misunderstandings concerning his views. He regrets this, and it was not his intention.

Trust

Together we realize that the current situation calls for much trust in the churches. These are important matters that have harmed the name of the Lord and of the churches, as well as the name of the university and of Dr. Harinck himself.

We emphatically expressed to one another the intention to proceed together in subjection to the Word of God and in adherence to the Reformed Confession. We also want to relate this renewed commitment to Scripture and confession to the churches.

There is homework to be done on both sides. We have concluded that the mutual fellowship in Kampen needs strengthening. We hope that, having learned from the intensive process of the



previous weeks, we may be able to continue in a more united way in our concrete tasks in the service of church and society. This intention we have clearly expressed to one another. And we also express it to the churches. We ask that you give us the necessary trust, as well as your support through prayer and words of encouragement.

May our gracious God help us through his Spirit.

This declaration was signed by Professor G. Harinck, by Rev. P. Niemeijer on behalf of the Board of Directors, by Mr. J. Messelink on behalf of the Committee for Archives and Documentation, by Rev. E.A. Boer on behalf of the Board of Trustees for the lecturing position of the ADC, and by Prof. Dr. C.J. de Ruijter as the director of the Theological University.

The letter from the churches of Australia calls this declaration unsatisfactory. While a foreign sister-church may certainly evaluate critically an event that took place in the churches in The Netherlands, that same church ought to accept the judgment of the Dutch churches that the case has been resolved. In the same year, 2008, the National Synod of Zwolle-Zuid decided to reject the objections to Dr. Harinck's statements, with a reference to the Declaration quoted above (Acts Zwolle-Zuid, 2008, Art. 105, decision 3). Moreover, at the request of the Curatorium of the university, a decision was made to continue at the TUK the special lecturing position originating in the Center for Archives and Documentation (ADC) of the Reformed Churches. This lecturing position has been extended for another six years. In 2014, the Synod of Ede-Zuid adopted a similar proposal. The continuation of the lectorate also implied the continuation of the appointment of Prof. Dr. G. Harinck. Looking back on the 2008 declaration, the BoT wants to state that the trust expressed at that time has been confirmed. Our Lord has heard the prayers addressed to Him at that time, and He gave restoration and renewal.

2.5. *Dr. A.L. Th. De Bruijne*

The contributions of De Bruijne to *Woord op Schrift, Theologische reflecties over het gezag van de bijbel* [Word inscripturated: theological reflections on the authority of the Bible], ed. Dr. C. Trimp, Kok Kampen, 2002, were the occasion for many objections. The letter from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, dated April 22, 2013, says that these objections were rejected on the grounds that the matter had already been dealt with by the Board of Trustees of the Theological University, and also because the objections were submitted too late. It is indeed the case that the Synod of Zwolle-Zuid, 2008, did not itself deal with the objections to these teachings.

In 2003 the Curatorium dealt extensively with the four objections submitted against the contributions of De Bruijne. The Curatorium wrote a lengthy response to all four of them. On May 17, 2003, a conference was organized by the magazine *De Reformatie* and the TUK (cf. *De Reformatie*, vol. 78, issues 33-41). At that conference De Bruijne was able to clear up a number of misunderstandings.

The Curatorium did not receive any further reactions to this response from the authors of the objections. No objections to the response of the Curatorium were sent to the General Synod of Amersfoort-Centrum, 2005. Neither did the Synod receive complaints concerning the way in which the Curatorium had defended the confessional character of the education and research at the university.

Although no objections to the actions of the Curatorium in this matter were before the Synod, the synodical committee dealing with matters related to the TUK was asked to give special attention



to the way in which the Curatorium had handled the objections to De Bruijne. The committee received the letters of objection and the responses of the Curatorium, and was able to gather information from Kampen. From this information they concluded that the Curatorium had carefully dealt with the matter. The Synod granted the proposal of the Drenthe committee to approve the actions of the Curatorium, and to discharge them from their duties. That this included their handling of the objection to De Bruijne is clear from the second ground of decision 1: “Deputy Curators have carefully and adequately handled the submitted objections” (Acts Amersfoort-Centrum, 2005, Art. 122, decision 1).

Subsequently the Synod of Zwolle-Zuid, 2008, rejected as inadmissible a letter of objection by certain brothers to the statements of the Curatorium concerning publications of Dr. De Bruijne. The ground for this was that the appeal against the statements of the Curatorium should have been submitted to the next meeting of its supervising body, in this case the General Synod of Amersfoort-Centrum, 2005 (Acts Zwolle-Zuid, Art. 105, decision 1, ground 1).

The BoT would like to point out that the Synod of Amersfoort-Centrum, 2005, already had arrived at an explicit conclusion concerning the dealings of the Curatorium of the university concerning the objections to the articles by De Bruijne. This can also be gleaned from the minutes of the discussion in the Acts of Synod.

3. Conclusion

In an additional document (Appendix 3) sent to the foreign churches, you will find a description of how the General Synod attempts to ensure that the education given in Kampen is Reformed in character. You will also find instructions concerning how to submit an objection, as a church member or consistory, to the writings of a professor. Such a document makes clear how the responsibilities are structured.

The BoT hopes to have made clear in this letter how the university and the churches have dealt with objections to publications and appointments of lecturers in the past 15 years. Even when the objections had not officially been submitted, the various Synods of the Reformed Churches have always dealt with those objections. Once every three years, the BoT and its predecessors gave an account of the way in which they had responded to objections of concerned church members. And the Synods discussed these accounts and approved them.

The BoT sincerely hopes that this document makes clear to you, as foreign sister- churches, how the churches in The Netherlands have responded to objections that you have raised in previous years. Even if this overview does not change your evaluation of the matters involved, the BoT hopes to be able to terminate the discussion with you regarding matters of the past. The university in Kampen is certainly willing to continue the academic debate with theologians connected to the churches who have expressed their objections. The continuation of that debate will serve the development of Reformed theology worldwide.

The Synod asked us to formulate a response to the foreign churches that would have the character of an extensive exposition, accessible to a broad audience. By means of this extensive overview we as the BoT believe we have fulfilled this request. Moreover, the BoT would like to point out that the TUK continually gives an account, also to a broader audience, of the developments in education and research as it takes place in Kampen. Anyone interested in further information can consult the Annual Reports published on the university’s website. We also refer to the Hamilton publication *Correctly handling the Word of Truth* which was recently



published, and the projected publication of a collection of articles on hermeneutics in the middle of 2015.

The BoT hopes that you will receive this letter with an open heart, and that it will serve to terminate the discussion about matters of the past. The BoT also hopes that you will find an occasion, at your convenience, to encourage the professors and researchers at the university in Kampen. Like everyone else, theologians, too, need now and then to hear positive words of appreciation. That would also help create space for mutually edifying conversation, including the occasional critical questions.

Rest assured that we have written this letter in cordial union with you in Christ.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Theological University,

Zwijndrecht, 8 november 2014

Rev. J. Ophoff, president

E.W. Evers, clerk

APPENDIX 22 – CRCA-SRN: Report – Appendix 5 – Agenda 8.2.3.6

Note: As this appendix is in Dutch, it is being published in the digital acts only.

De Theologische Universiteit, de synode en de kerken**- een eenvoudige weergave van de verantwoordelijkheden -**

De Theologische Universiteit in Kampen is de school van de kerken. De Generale Synode heeft daarvoor verantwoordelijkheid. Maar op welke manier ziet de Generale Synode erop toe dat er in Kampen gereformeerd onderwijs wordt gegeven? En hoe kun je als gemeentelid of kerkenraad bezwaar maken tegen wat een hoogleraar schrijft?

Van verschillende kanten werd die vraag gesteld aan de synode van Ede 2014. Het klonk in brieven van kerkenraden, in het Appel dat door 1541 kerkleden was ondertekend en het kwam terug in de vermaningen van de zusterkerken in het buitenland. Er bleek misverstand en sommigen hadden de ervaring dat ze van het kastje naar de muur gestuurd werden. Was hierover duidelijkheid te geven?

Het moderamen van de synode kreeg de opdracht een toegankelijk document te publiceren waarin één en ander zo helder mogelijk is beschreven: de verantwoordelijkheden m.b.t. het gereformeerde karakter van de TU en het toezicht op docenten en onderzoekers.

Ander bestuursmodel TU

Het bestuursmodel van de TU is veranderd. Er is niet meer de eenvoudige structuur van een jaar of twintig geleden. Toen hadden deputaten-curatoren, aangesteld door de synode, het bestuur over de TU. Maar de Nederlandse wetgeving over het wetenschappelijk onderwijs is veranderd. Alle universiteiten moeten eenzelfde bestuursmodel hebben. Alleen zo blijft de universiteit door de overheid erkend. Dat is nodig, omdat studenten anders geen erkende diploma's kunnen behalen en ook geen studiefinanciering krijgen. Voor de duidelijkheid: dit staat los van de vraag of de TU (gedeeltelijk) financiering van de overheid krijgt. Ook zonder die financiering was een nieuw bestuursmodel nodig.

Er is nu een bestuursmodel met een College van Bestuur en een Raad van Toezicht. Daardoor is er aan de ene kant meer afstand gekomen tussen de TU en de synode, dus ook tussen de TU en de kerken. Aan de andere kant is er juist een Curatorium ingesteld (in een andere functie dan eerst) om de band tussen TU en synode/kerken te versterken.

Het College van Bestuur (CvB) is het bevoegde gezag binnen de TU. Het is verantwoordelijk voor het totale beheer en beleid, ook voor het toezicht op de hoogleraren en docenten. Dit College van Bestuur wordt benoemd door de Raad van Toezicht.

De Raad van Toezicht (RvT) ziet toe op het beheer en beleid van het CvB, en dus ook op het gereformeerd karakter van onderwijs en onderzoek. Deze raad wordt benoemd door de synode en legt, net als ieder deputaatschap, aan de synode verantwoording af. Op deze manier is het kerkelijke toezicht op de TU vastgelegd.

Het Curatorium is een commissie van de RvT; het adviseert gevraagd en ongevraagd over het wetenschappelijk niveau van de TU, over het gereformeerde karakter ervan en over het afwijzen van alles wat met Gods Woord en de gereformeerde confessie in strijd is. Het Curatorium (vier predikanten en twee wetenschappers van een andere universiteit) wordt ook benoemd door de synode. Ede 2014

Toezicht op docenten

Wie ziet er nu op toe dat hoogleraren en andere docenten of onderzoekers in hun werk blijven bij de grondslag van de TU: het Woord van God en de gereformeerde belijdenis? Dat is vooral de taak van het College van Bestuur. Het curatorium adviseert het CvB hierover.

Het CvB heeft gesprekken met docenten en onderzoekers. Als er aanleiding voor is, kan een nadere verantwoording worden gevraagd. Desnoods kan het CvB maatregelen nemen tegen een docent of onderzoeker. In het uiterste geval volgt er gedwongen ontslag.

Als het gaat om iemand die benoemd is door de synode, kan het CvB aan een synode voorstellen om hem te ontslaan. De beslissing ligt dan bij de synode.

Docenten en onderzoekers die niet door de synode maar door het CvB zijn benoemd, worden door het CvB ontslagen (alle gewone hoogleraren en de docenten met een vaste aanstelling voor minstens 60% worden door de synode benoemd en ontslagen; anderen door het CvB).

Het initiatief voor zo'n maatregel (tot en met ontslag) vanwege afwijking van de belijdenis wordt, als het goed is, genomen door het College van Bestuur zelf. Maar als het CvB dit niet doet, kan ook het Curatorium aan de bel trekken, of de Raad van Toezicht. Zij kunnen niet zelf maatregelen nemen, maar wel het CvB oproepen dit te doen. Wanneer het CvB zo'n oproep naast zich neer zou leggen, komt zo'n zaak bij de synode. Want het CvB en de RvT en ook het Curatorium rapporteren aan de synode. Dan zal de synode hierover een uitspraak kunnen doen.

Bezwaar maken tegen een docent

Kun je als gemeentelid of kerkenraad ook bezwaar maken tegen wat een hoogleraar of andere docent zegt of schrijft? Uiteraard ga je dan eerst met de betrokkene in gesprek. Ook als het gaat om iets dat publiek geschreven of gezegd is. Levert dat geen overeenstemming op, dan kun je je bezwaar neerleggen bij het College van Bestuur. De regel is dat je dat uiterlijk binnen een jaar doet.

Het CvB vraagt advies van het Curatorium en neemt een beslissing. Als het bezwaar wordt afgewezen, zal het CvB dat uitleggen aan wie het bezwaar had ingediend. In het uitzonderlijke geval dat het CvB tot een ander oordeel komt dan het Curatorium of de RvT, komt dit via hun rapportage op de tafel van de synode.

Een afgewezen bezwaar voorleggen aan de synode

Wat zijn je mogelijkheden als je bezwaar tegen een docent of onderzoeker is afgewezen door het College van Bestuur? Of als er geen antwoord op je bezwaren komt? Het CvB, en ook de RvT met het Curatorium, brengen verslag uit aan de Generale Synode. Deze verslagen zijn openbaar en worden op tijd gepubliceerd. Alle kerkenraden hebben gelegenheid om op die rapporten te reageren. Als reactie op dat rapport kan een kerkenraad de synode vragen om uit te spreken dat een bezwaar tegen een docent ten onrechte is afgewezen. Een kerkenraad kan de synode voorstellen om bij het CvB aan te dringen op maatregelen tegen een docent of onderzoeker. Ook kan de synode, als het nodig is, het CvB of de RvT erop aanspreken als bezwaren niet goed beantwoord worden.

Net als bij andere deputaten-rapporten hebben 'gewone' gemeenteleden niet de mogelijkheid om zelf de synode aan te schrijven. Zij kunnen vragen aan hun kerkenraad om dit te doen. De synode is namelijk een vergadering van kerkén, niet de ledenvergadering van een vereniging.



Wanneer een synode meent dat er inderdaad maatregelen nodig zijn tegen een docent of onderzoeker, kan zij Ede 2014 dat niet altijd zelf doen. Iemand die niet door de synode is benoemd, kan ook niet door de synode worden ontslagen. De synode kan ‘slechts’ oordelen dat het College van Bestuur ten onrechte geen maatregelen genomen heeft. In een gezonde situatie zal het CvB dit dan vervolgens wel doen.

Direct bezwaar maken bij de synode?

Wie direct aan de synode vraagt om uit te spreken dat een docent of onderzoeker buiten de grondslag van Schrift en belijdenis gegaan is, zal geen gehoor vinden. De enige juiste weg (na gesprek met de betrokkene zelf!) is het indienen van een bezwaar bij het College van Bestuur. Alleen langs die weg kan het bezwaar eventueel ook ter beoordeling aan de synode voorgelegd worden.

Wetenschappelijke vrijheid voor een Universiteit

Onze kerken hebben tientallen jaren geleden al gekozen voor een wetenschappelijke opleiding met erkenning door de overheid. K. Schilder zette zich al in voor het promotierecht: aan de school der kerken moesten algemeen erkende wetenschappelijke titels behaald kunnen worden. Daarbij past het om het wetenschappelijke debat aan te gaan met theologen uit heel andere richtingen. Met hen sta je vaak niet op de grondslag van de gereformeerde belijdenis. Dan moet je ook argumenten en methoden gebruiken die door hen erkend worden. Daarom, en door het vakwetenschappelijk niveau, zal de taal en de argumentatie in zulke publicaties vaak anders zijn dan wat binnenkerkelijk voor een breed publiek geschreven wordt.

Om te kunnen zijn wat de kerken willen, een erkende universiteit met betekenis voor theologie-beoefening wereldwijd, moet aan docenten en onderzoekers die wetenschappelijke vrijheid worden toevertrouwd. Zelf staan ze daarbij op het fundament van Schrift en belijdenis. Ze binden zich daar ook aan, door ondertekening van het bindingsformulier. Vanuit die basis gaan zij het debat aan met andere theologen op een wetenschappelijk verantwoorde manier.

Dankbaar zijn en kritisch blijven

We mogen God dankbaar zijn voor de enorme rijkdom van een gereformeerde universiteit. Altijd al hebben we als kerken het belangrijk gevonden dat aanstaande predikanten een universitaire opleiding krijgen. De TU heeft een goede plek binnen de theologie-beoefening in Nederland en wereldwijd. Er wordt op wetenschappelijk niveau onderzoek gedaan en er worden nieuwe theologen opgeleid.

Docenten en onderzoekers willen hun werk doen in gebondenheid aan Gods Woord en in trouw aan de belijdenis. Laten we hun het vertrouwen geven dat zij dat inderdaad doen. Tegelijk moeten we kritisch mee blijven kijken hoe de theologie-beoefening in Kampen richting kiest en houdt. Ook in Kampen zijn ménsen aan het werk. Trouw aan Gods Woord is nooit vanzelfsprekend. Daarom zijn er de instrumenten van CvB, RvT en Curatorium ingesteld, en is er de mogelijkheid van bezwaar. Zo dragen we samen als kerken verantwoordelijkheid, biddend en dankend.

voor het moderamen van de GS Ede 2014,

R.J. Vreugdenhil, scriba II



Wat hierboven beschreven is, is formeel vastgelegd in het Statuut van de Theologische Universiteit van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Acta GS Harderwijk, bijlage 6.3; ook beschikbaar op de site van de TU te Kampen)

APPENDIX 23 – CRCA-SRN: Report – Appendix 6 – Agenda 8.2.3.7

Note: As this appendix is in Dutch, it is being published in the digital acts only.

Appendix 6: Decisions NGK

14 juni 2014

Contacten met de Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK)

Materiaal:

1. rapport deputaten kerkelijke eenheid (DKE) 2013;
2. brief van de Landelijke Vergadering van de NGK Houten 2010 met als bijlage de besluiten inzake de binnenlandse kerkelijke relaties (07-09-2011);
3. Acta van de Landelijke Vergadering van de NGK Houten 2010-2011 (13-02-2013);
4. brief van de Landelijke Vergadering van de NGK Zeewolde 2013 waarin de Generale Synode Ede 2014 Gods zegen voor het werk wordt toegewenst (06-11-2013);
5. brief van de Landelijke Vergadering van de Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken Zeewolde 2013–2014 (17-03-2014), waarin mededeling gedaan wordt van het volgende besluit:

de Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt), in Generale Synode te Ede bijeen, uit te nodigen om op DV 31 oktober 2016 samen met de Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken te verklaren dat de Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) en de Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken zich in een staat van hereniging bevinden.

Besluit 1:

de brief onder materiaal 5 in behandeling te nemen.

Gronden:

1. de brief is weliswaar na de sluitingsdatum voor ingekomen stukken bij de synode binnen gekomen, maar dit was tijdig aangekondigd;
2. het concrete verzoek kon niet eerder worden ingezonden, daar de LV eerst op 1 maart 2014 hierover een besluit heeft genomen;
3. de GS en de LV komen bewust in dezelfde periode samen; het zou onwenselijk zijn als besluiten van die vergaderingen die de onderlinge relaties aangaan meerdere jaren op een antwoord zouden moeten wachten;
4. in de brief wordt geen nieuwe zaak aan de agenda van de synode toegevoegd; de behandeling past in het kader van de nog te houden bespreking over het rapport van deputaten kerkelijke eenheid met betrekking tot de NGK.

Besluit 2:

met blijdschap kennis te nemen van de rapportage over de gesprekken met de Commissie voor Contact en Samenspreking van de NGK en de resultaten daarvan zoals die verwoord zijn in het rapport en met name in de notitie Tweede Overeenstemming.

Grond:

de rapportage geeft er blijk van, dat de gesprekken over de hermeneutiek eensgezindheid tonen, die o.a. zichtbaar wordt in de notities Eerste en Tweede Overeenstemming.

Besluit 3:

uit te spreken dat door de overeenstemming in de gesprekken over hermeneutiek de belemmering die er lag vanwege het besluit van de NGK om de ambten voor de zusters der gemeente open te stellen, is weggenomen. Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde kerken in Nederland Ede 2014

Grond:

ondanks het verschil in praktische uitkomsten ten aanzien van de vrouw in het ambt, is gebleken dat we als kerken elkaar vertrouwen kunnen geven inzake de erkenning en aanvaarding van het gezag van de Heilige Schrift.

Besluit 4:

de contacten met de NGK voort te zetten en over te gaan van gesprekken naar samensprekingen met het oog op kerkelijke eenheid.

Grond:

nu de belangrijkste belemmering is weggenomen, ligt de weg naar samensprekingen over daadwerkelijke kerkelijke eenheid open.

Besluit 5:

dankbaar te zijn voor de brief van de LV Zeewolde 2013-2014 en die te beschouwen als een hartelijke aansporing om verder te gaan op de weg naar hereniging.

Gronden:

1. het is vertroostend en verblijdend te constateren dat de Heer van de kerk de NGK en de GKv 50 jaar na de droeve scheuring zo dicht tot elkaar heeft doen naderen;
2. nu al ingaan op de uitnodiging voor een gezamenlijke verklaring zou betekenen dat de fase van 'samensprekingen met het oog op kerkelijke eenheid' in het traject naar kerkelijke eenheid zou worden overgeslagen.

APPENDIX 24 – SCBP: Supplementary Report – Agenda 8.2.9.1

The Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise submits the following supplementary report for General Synod Dunnville 2016.

1.) Contact with URCNA Psalter Hymnal Committee regarding a Common Songbook (Acts, Art. 182)

General Synod 2013 mandated the committee to renew the initiative of working toward a common songbook, as an appropriate aspect of continuing to prepare for the eventual union of the two federations. On March 17, 2014, the SCBP sent an e-mail to Rev. Rand Lankheet and Rev. Harry Zekveld, members of the URCNA Psalter Hymnal committee for the two Ontario URCNA classes, making known our desire to “revive the lines of communication between our respective songbook committees, so that, in line with the stipulations of Phase 2 Ecumenical Relations, we make one another aware of developments in our work for the songbooks of our federations. Since the URCNA and the OPC are both sister churches of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and are cooperating in the production of a new Psalter Hymnal, we would like to encourage restored and regular communication between our committees.” The reply indicated that our request would be brought to the committee for an official response. In the meantime, Rev. Zekveld directed our attention to the website where we could view the proposed psalm collection of the joint URCNA/OPC Psalter Hymnal. To date, we have not received the URCNA Psalter Hymnal’s promised “official response” to our request for renewed regular communication.

The 2014 Synod of the URCNA adopted a collection of psalms for inclusion in the proposed joint URCNA/OPC Psalter Hymnal, a total of some 275 songs. 21 of the psalms are set to Genevan tunes. The committee is proposing a hymn collection of some 278 hymns, for adoption at Synod 2016. Their proposed timetable is as follows: May 1, 2015 – Completion of proposed Hymnal collection posted online; December 31, 2015 – Deadline for responses from churches and individuals; Approx. March 2016 – Finalization of proposal in time for the agendas of the Synod/General Assembly.

The OPC General Assembly of 2014 also adopted the proposed collection of psalms: After a period of questions, the committee’s recommendation, “that the 81st General Assembly approve the metrical psalms, psalm paraphrases, and psalm partials for the proposed psalter-hymnal as a package,” was approved by the assembly.

2.) Proposed Change to Belgic Confession, Article 34.

In consultation with Dr. Jason Van Vliet and Dr. Jannes Smith, the committee proposes to replace the word ‘expiation’ in the first sentence with the word ‘propitiation’. The revised text would read as follows:

“We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law (Rom 10:4), has by his shed blood put an end to every other shedding of blood that one could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sins.”

The following serves as grounds for this recommendation:

1. It is clear that the change from ‘propitiation’ to ‘expiation’ occurred in the work leading to the 1984 Book of Praise. A look in the archives of the SCBP reveals a draft page of Belgic Confession Article 34 which had the old ‘propitiation’ which was scratched out in pen and

‘expiation’ was written above it. All the draft copies after that have ‘expiation’. There is no explanation for the change. There is simply a note in brackets that whereas the French & Latin of the Belgic Confession have both ‘propitiation and satisfaction’ the Corpus Reformatorum only has the latter, i.e., ‘satisfaction’. That is interesting but it doesn’t answer the question why ‘propitiation’ was changed to ‘expiation’.

2. Bakhuizen van den Brink clearly indicates that both the French & Latin have ‘propitiation’, while the Dutch has a word that could mean more generally ‘atonement’ but certainly could mean ‘propitiation’ as well. So, as far as faithfulness to the original is concerned, ‘propitiation’ would be the better way to go.

3. The RSV has ‘expiation’ in 6 passages; the ESV (to which the rest of the Book of Praise 2014 is aligned) in none. Of these six, three times RSV has the verb ‘make expiation’. Of these three the ESV once has ‘cleanses’ (Deut. 32:43), once ‘make atonement’ (2 Sam. 21:3), and once ‘make propitiation’ (Heb. 2:17). The other three times the RSV has the noun ‘expiation’, and in all three the ESV changes it to ‘propitiation’ (Rom. 3:25, 1 Jn. 2:2, 4:10). Making the recommended change to Article 34 ensures a closer alignment with the ESV.

4. It should also be said that in Belgic Confession Article 34 the word ‘propitiation’ (or ‘expiation’, as we have it presently) is speaking most directly about Old Testament sacrifices. As the text says, the shedding of Christ’s blood puts an end to all other shedding of blood “that one could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sins.” The only drawback with translating ‘propitiation’ here is that when the person in the pew reads his Old Testament in ESV or NIV84 he will not see that word ‘propitiation’ anywhere. The word is always ‘atonement’, or ‘atoning sacrifice’. For that reason it might be easier to have “one could or would make as an atonement or satisfaction for sins.”

5. Even after taking the comment in #4 into consideration, the best solution may still be to switch back to the word ‘propitiation’. It is true to the original. It is better than ‘expiation’. And even though ‘propitiation’ may take some explanation, it’s not so bad if God’s people need to learn some (new) vocabulary to appreciate the riches of Christ’s work for us.

6. In Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1984), p. 888, a discussion on the word ‘propitiation’ concludes that “the consistent Bible view is that the sin of man has incurred the wrath of God. That wrath is averted only by Christ’s atoning offering.

From this standpoint his saving work is properly called propitiation.” Both this discussion and the ESV’s scrubbing of ‘expiation’ in favour of ‘propitiation’ suggest that ‘expiation’ has problematic associations in theological debate.

Respectfully submitted,

The Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise:

Arie H. den Hollander, secretary/treasurer

Dr. Jannes Smith

George Ph. van Popta, convenor

Richard Wynia

APPENDIX 25 – Days of Prayer Report – Agenda 8.2.13

Canadian Reformed Church Edmonton-Providence
Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church Burlington-Waterdown

October 28, 2015

General Synod Dunnville, 2016
c/o Canadian Reformed Church at Dunnville
109 Inman Road, PO Box 51
Dunnville, ON N1A 2X1
dunnvilleclerk@gmail.com

att: Agenda Committee,

Dear Brothers:

Synod Carman 2013 appointed the Churches at Burlington-Waterdown and Edmonton-Providence as the two churches to proclaim a Day of Prayer in accordance with article 54 of our Church Order. Since that appointment we have received no requests for a Day of Prayer.

Brothers, we wish you God's blessings in all your deliberations.

Respectfully submitted,



Rick Ludwig, clerk of Burlington-Waterdown



Keith Jansen, Clerk of Edmonton-Providence

APPENDIX 26 – General Fund Report – Agenda 8.2.17

From: the Canadian Reformed at Carman East

March 7, 2016

General Synod 2016, Dunnville, ON

RE: Financial Report for General Fund from January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2015

Esteemed Brothers,

The church of Carman East was appointed by Synod Carman (2013), Article 30 to administer the General Fund and to collect funds as required from the churches, The council of Carman East had appointed br. Gerry Vandersluis as treasurer for this fund and he continues in this capacity. Two officebearers audited these books and found them to be in good order. To administer this fund the churches were assessed \$4 per communicant member for 2013, \$4 for 2014 and \$3 for 2015.

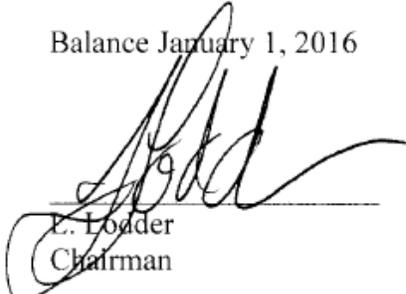
Income:

Balance January 1, 2013	\$22095.92	
Assessment from the churches	<u>\$116067.33</u>	
Total Income		\$138163.25

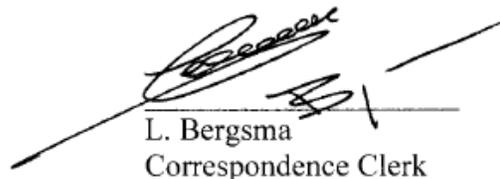
Expenses:

Book of Praise Committee	\$7618.24	
Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad	\$39265.92	
Committee for Contact with Churches of North America	\$19045.95	
Committee for Ecclesiastical Unity	\$12259.69	
Theological Education Committee	\$3822.15	
Web site	\$1688.08	
Premier Printing (reports for General Synod)	\$12427.50	
Bank Charges	\$297.00	
Blank Cheques	<u>\$124.13</u>	
Total Expenses		\$96548.66

Balance January 1, 2016		\$41614.59
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 E. Loder
 Chairman



 L. Bergsma
 Correspondence Clerk



APPENDIX 27 – Address Church Report – Agenda 8.2.18

Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church

607 Dynes Road Burlington, Ontario Canada, L7N 2V4
905 333 3555

March 22, 2016

To General Synod Dunnville 2016

Report of the Address Church for the Canadian Reformed Churches

Esteemed brothers,

General Synod Carman 2013 re-appointed Burlington Ebenezer as the Address Church for the Canadian Reformed Churches.

We received two requests from the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches to update the statistical information regarding the Canadian Reformed Churches. We responded to each request with information taken from the most recent copy of the Yearbook of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

With brotherly greetings,

For the consistory with the deacons,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Bosscher', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

J. Bosscher, clerk



APPENDIX 28 – Archive Church Report – Agenda 8.2.19

Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church

607 Dynes Road Burlington, Ontario Canada, L7N 2V4
905 333 3555

March 22, 2016

To General Synod Dunnville 2016

Report on the Archives of General Synod

Esteemed brothers,

General Synod Carman 2013 re-appointed the Burlington Ebenezer Church to keep and maintain the archives for general synod.

All material from General Synod Carmen 2013 has been placed in the Archives of General Synod and has been catalogued.

We have received no inquiries for information or request for materials from the archives since the last General Synod.

We note that brother Jonathan Chase has completed scanning of all the Synod archive material for the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary – all Acts, reports, and standing committee material.

The Archives have been inspected by two brothers representing the Burlington-Waterdown Church, and they will be submitting a separate report on the inspection to Synod.

with brotherly greetings,

For the consistory with the deacons,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Bosscher', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

J. Bosscher, clerk



APPENDIX 29 – Archive Inspection Report – Agenda 8.2.10



1225 Dundas Street, R.R. #1, Burlington, Ontario L7R 3X4

September 14, 2015

Canadian Reformed Church at Dunnville
109 Inman Road, PO Box 51
Dunnville, ON N1A 2X1
dunnvilleclerk@gmail.com

By Electronic Submission and 5 mailed copies

General Synod Dunnville, 2016

Re: Report on the inspection of the Archives for Synod Carman 2013

Esteemed Brothers:

We dutifully report that on Wednesday, August 26, 2015, Frank Marchese and Jack Vanderhorst inspected the archives of **Synod Carman, Manitoba 2013** in the care of Klaas Spithoff of Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church.

The records have been found to be complete and in good order.

On behalf of the Council of Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church,
Sincerely,



J.C. Torenvliet
Council Chair



Rick Ludwig
Council Clerk

APPENDIX 30 – Guidelines for General Synods¹⁵**I Convening and Constitution of Synod**

- A. The convening Church shall set the date on which Synod shall meet (cf. Art. 49, CO). The convening church shall publish the date along with the rule:
- All material for Synod should be received by the convening Church (in digital format, and five paper copies)¹⁶ no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of General Synod. Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.¹⁷
- B. Correspondence from the convening church, including the notice of convocation, agendas, reports, and proposals may be sent to the churches and/or delegates as digital files. However, in order to maintain the confidentiality of potentially sensitive material, personal appeals as well as other documents which contain personal information (e.g., letters of appointment) must be sent from the convening church as password-protected digital files.¹⁸
- C. The convening Church shall send the first Provisional Agenda to all the Churches at least six months prior to convocation.
- D. All material submitted to the convening Church together with a copy of the current Guidelines for General Synods shall be sent to all delegates and the first alternates.¹⁹ All material submitted to Synod, including Reports, Appeals, Overtures which quote any foreign language source must provide in the text of the submission a full English translation and in a footnote the citation in the original language.²⁰
- E. All material for Synod should be received by the convening Church (in digital format, and five paper copies)²¹ no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of General Synod. Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.²²
- F. Since matters on the agenda of general synod involve the churches in common, regional synods shall distribute copies of adopted overtures to all the churches in the federation no later than five months prior to the convening of a general synod.²³
- G. The minister of the convening Church or its counselor shall act as chairman until Synod has been constituted.
1. He shall call the meeting to order in an ecclesiastical manner (cf. Art. 34, CO);
 2. He shall have the credentials examined as to whether General Synod can be constituted.
- H. Officers of Synod shall be chosen by ballot in this order: chairman, vice-chairman, first clerk, and second clerk. Election to office is to be by majority of valid votes cast.

¹⁵ GS 1983 Art. 45.¹⁶ GS 2013 Art. 173.¹⁷ GS 1995 Art. 111; GS 2004 Art. 118.¹⁸ GS 2013 Art. 173.¹⁹ GS 1986 Art. 76; GS 1995 Art. 111.²⁰ GS 1989 Art. 131.²¹ GS 2013 Art. 173.²² GS 1986 Art. 162; GS 1995 Art. 110.²³ GS 2010 Art. 35, 174.

- I. Although advice can be requested in particular matters, advisory members shall not be appointed.²⁴
- J The convening church shall arrange to have people present during Synod to assist the clerks in preparing the Acts and to do other paper work.²⁵

II Duties of the Officers

A. The Chairman

1. The chairman shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and is expedited as much as possible, and that members observe the rules of order and decorum (cf. CO 34, 35).
2. He shall call the meeting to order at the appointed time, call the roll and shall see to it that each session is properly opened and closed.
3. He shall welcome fraternal delegates or other guests and respond to greetings received or appoint other members for this purpose.
4. He shall place before Synod every motion that is made and seconded, in accord with the accepted order; and he shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken, so that every member may know on what he is voting.
5. If the chairman feels the need to speak on a pending question, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice-chairman for that period of time. While holding the chair, he may speak to state matters of fact or to inform Synod regarding points of order.
6. He shall have, and duly exercise, the prerogative of declaring a motion or a person out of order. If his ruling is challenged, it shall be submitted to Synod for decision by majority vote.
7. The chairman shall retain his right to vote on any question.
8. In case of a point of order, the chairman must make a ruling at once. This ruling may be reversed by a majority of Synod, if any member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair and appeals to the floor.
9. The chairman shall close the Synod with appropriate remarks and prayer (CO 34).

B. The Vice-Chairman

1. The vice-chairman shall, in the absence of the chairman, assume all his duties and privileges.
2. The vice-chairman shall render all possible assistance to the chairman as circumstances require.
3. He shall prepare the Press Release.

C. The First Clerk

1. Every morning, after the roll call, he shall read the *Acts* of the previous day.
2. He shall keep a proper record of the business of Synod. This record should ordinarily contain:
 - a. The opening and closing of sessions and roll call.
 - b. All motions whether carried or defeated.

²⁴ GS 2007, Art. 147.

²⁵ GS 2010, Art. 174.



- c. All final reports of committees and all decisions of Synod.
- d. Any document or part of debate or address that Synod by a majority vote has decided to insert in the *Acts*.

3. He shall not include in the *Acts* any motion that was withdrawn.

D. The Second Clerk

- 1. The second clerk shall serve in the absence of the first clerk.
- 2. He shall render assistance to the first clerk as circumstances require.
- 3. He shall handle outgoing mail on behalf of Synod.

III Synodical Committees

A. Advisory Committees of Synod

- 1. The officers of Synod shall propose advisory committees, with a convener, to serve for the duration of Synod.
- 2. The officers of Synod shall propose an arrangement of matters on the agenda to the appropriate committees.
- 3. All reports shall be distributed in ample time before they are presented for discussion.
- 4. The committee reporter shall present the reports.
- 5. If there is a minority report as well as a majority report, both reports shall be given into discussion, but the majority report shall be voted upon first.
- 6. During the discussion, the task of defending the report shall rest primarily with the reporter of the committee. Other committee members shall receive the privilege of the floor to elaborate on or clarify any point.
- 7. In order to facilitate the discussion on a pending issue, the chair shall ordinarily call for the discussion in two parts (rounds). In the first part opportunity is given to members to express remarks related to the issue in question. In the second or following parts, members may react to the discussion or the issue in question.
- 8. The discussion may be extended by discretion of the chairman or by a decision of Synod.
- 9. If anyone has been requested to advise Synod on any matter, he shall address synod on this point only when asked to do so by the chair.

B. Synodical Committees

- 1. All committees appointed by Synod shall see to it that they send a copy of their report in digital format to each of the local churches.²⁶

IV Rules of Order

A. Closed Sessions of Synod

- 1. A closed session shall ordinarily mean a session where members of Synod and office-bearers may be present. This shall be used in delicate or unusual situations.
- 2. A closed-restricted session shall, as a rule, mean a session where members of Synod only may be present. This shall only take place when Synod judges that such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honour or the welfare of the Churches in extremely delicate situations.

²⁶ GS 1995 Art. 110; GS 2013 Art. 173.

B. Main Motions

A main motion is one which presents a certain subject for consideration or action.

1. A main motion is acceptable under the following conditions:
 - a. The mover has been recognized by the chair.
 - b. The motion has been seconded.
 - c. The motion is also presented in writing.
2. A main motion is not acceptable if another main motion is before Synod or if it conflicts with any decision already made by Synod.
3. A notice of motion may be given during the discussion.

C. A Motion to Amend

This is a proposal to alter a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the motion.

1. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute certain words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs.
2. A motion to amend is not a proper amendment if it nullifies the main motion or is not germane to it.
3. A motion to amend an amendment is permissible and is called a secondary motion.

D. Call for a Division of the Question

At the request of one or more members of Synod, a motion consisting of more than one part must be divided and voted upon separately, unless Synod decides that this is not necessary.

E. Objection to Consideration of a Question

If any member is not satisfied with the ruling of the chair, the matter is referred to Synod for a decision.

F. Right of Protest

It is the right of any member to protest against any decision of Synod. Protest should be registered immediately, or during the session in which the matter concerned was acted upon. Protests must be registered individually and not in groups. Members may, if they feel the need, ask to have their negative vote recorded. Such requests must be made immediately after the vote is taken.

G. Motion to Bring Matters Once Decided Again Before Synod

Any member of Synod, for weighty reasons, may move to have a matter reconsidered, which was previously decided. The purpose of this motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote.

H. Discussion

1. To obtain the floor, a speaker must be recognized by the chair.
2. If any member has spoken twice on a pending issue, others who have not yet spoken twice shall, as a rule, be given priority by the chair.
3. When the chairman believes that a motion under consideration has been debated sufficiently, he may propose cessation of debate. If a majority of Synod sustains his proposal, discussion shall cease and the vote shall be taken.



4. Any member of Synod, when he deems a matter to have been debated sufficiently, may move to close the discussion. Should a majority be in favour, the vote shall be taken, but only after those who have already requested the floor have been recognized.

I. Voting

1. It is in the freedom of the chair to determine how the vote is to be taken: by calling the roll (in any order) or by show of hands.²⁷
2. Voting about persons shall be by ballot.
3. Voting about delicate matters and other matters of a critical nature shall also be by ballot.

J. Revision

These Synodical Guidelines may be suspended, amended, revised or abrogated by a majority vote of Synod.

²⁷ GS 2010 Art. 174.

APPENDIX 31 – EF: Ruled for Ecclesiastical Fellowship²⁸

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

In exercising these relations, the churches shall strive to implement also the following:

6. When major changes or additions are being considered to the confessions, church government or liturgy, the churches shall be informed in order that as much consultation can take place as possible before a final decision is taken.
7. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to participate as much as local regulations permit.

²⁸ GS 1992 Art. 50.