

# R E P O R T OF THE COMMITTEE FOR CONTACT WITH CHURCHES IN THE AMERICAS

## TO THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES TO BE HELD IN CHATHAM, ONTARIO IN 2004

### *1. Introduction*

General Synod Neerlandia 2001 appointed the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas with the following members: J. DeGelder, P. Feenstra, W. Gortemaker, K. Jonker, L. Knegt, J. Moesker, W. Oostdyk, A. Poppe and G. VanWoudenberg.

At the first meeting Rev. Feenstra was appointed as chairman, Rev. DeGelder as secretary and Rev. Moesker as treasurer.

The various instructions of Synod Neerlandia were divided over two subcommittees. The members from Manitoba formed Subcommittee West, which was responsible for the contacts with the RCUS, the IPCM, and the IRB. The members from Ontario formed Subcommittee East, which was responsible for the contacts with the OPC, the ERQ, the KPC in NA, as well as for sending an observer to NAPARC.

In 2001 no delegates were available to attend the annual NAPARC meeting in November, whereas in 2002 it turned out to be more practical that brothers from the Subcommittee West would attend.

General meetings of the CCCA were held on September 7, 2001 and on September 6, 2002.

Concern was expressed about the fact that the majority of the CCCA members are scheduled to retire at Synod 2004. As it now stands only two of the serving members are scheduled to remain in the committee. We are of the opinion that Synod should address this imbalance.

### *2. Subcommittee East*

#### *2.1 Meetings*

Meetings of the Eastern Subcommittee were held on October 22, 2001; May 7, 2002; August 13, 2002; March 10, 2003 and April 15, 2003 with Rev. Feenstra as chairman and Rev. DeGelder as secretary. In the meeting of August 13, 2002 the committee met with two brothers from the ERQ, and on April 15, 2003 the committee met with the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relationships of the OPC.

#### *2.2 The Orthodox Presbyterian Church*

##### *2.2.1 Structure of future discussions*

At the 68<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the OPC (2001) in Grand Rapids the decision of Synod Neerlandia to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC was received with much joy. In response the G.A. decided "to approve the Agreement formulated jointly by the Committee on Contact with the

Orthodox Presbyterian Church of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, with the understanding that as of this approval the two churches are in Ecclesiastical Fellowship”.

Rev. DeGelder and br. G. Nordeman attended this G.A. as representatives of the CanRC. Also in personal contacts much thankfulness was expressed that after many years we have been able to come to this point together. The G.A. addressed the following letter to the CanRC.

Our dear brothers of the Canadian Reformed Churches,

It is with deep gratitude and humility that this, the 68<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, has received through our Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations the recent gracious actions of your Synod Neerlandia 2001 in order to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship between our two churches. We are also most thankful to be informed that this decision was reached unanimously. You have now expressed forcefully your sense of unity with us and we delight to express ours with you. Praise be to our wise and mighty God! How worthy he is of our worship!

This General Assembly therefore is happy to inform you that it has approved the Agreement, as your Synod Neerlandia 2001 did, thus opening the door for our two churches to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with each other. We understand the action of this General Assembly accepting the above agreement, in accordance with your action 5.5, "... upon their acceptance of the proposed agreement" to have the force of establishing the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship between us as of this date. We trust that this is your understanding, also.

Further, this General Assembly concurs in your desire, expressed in 5.6, "To continue contact with the OPC by the CCOPC... with the mandate to continue the discussions on the existing differences in confession and church polity as noted in the considerations and to work toward further unity". We are grateful for this desire on your part for it is ours also, and our CEIR will plan to work fully with you to that end. Since it is your action, and we are responding, may we ask that your committee take the initiative to arrange the next meeting?

Finally, we should be remiss were we not to express with this letter our gratitude to God and our appreciation of your churches' desire for the unity of the body of Christ, and the ongoing willingness of your CCOPC to work diligently and to meet with our CEIR over the years to bring us closer together. We do so now with a glad heart.

We believe that God has been glorified by our respective decisions to express our unity in Christ. We may now rejoice together that in his mercy we have this new unity for which we have striven for many years and which we hope will bring increasing perfection in years ahead; we presume now upon God to ask of Him further mercies to produce such fruit, bringing us increasingly closer to each other and to our God and his truth. "His tender mercies are over all his works." Psalm 145:9.

Donald J. Duff, Stated Clerk.

We note with thankfulness the expressed willingness of the OPC to continue the discussions on the existing differences between our two churches. At the meetings of the Subcommittee East a considerable amount of time was spent to discuss the question how to deal with this "continued discussion" on a committee level. These discussions led us to the following conclusions. As committee we believe that there is no point in just a general discussion on divergences or differences. Over the past 20 years or so, many of the issues have been discussed, many position papers have been written and presented to the CEIR. Quite often the OPC has commented on our position and answered our questions. Synod did not instruct us to find out which of their responses were not satisfying. It will be important to determine the goal of ongoing discussions. Discussion for the sake of discussion is in the end a waste. We should try to focus first of all on the two points of the joint agreement. It might be helpful and clarifying to entertain a discussion as to how these principles are put into practice, or should be put into practice. It would be helpful not to restrict ourselves to formal discussions between the CCCA and the CEIR, but to explore other ways to promote this "continued discussion". For instance, through articles in each other's magazines, attending office bearers conferences, and cooperation in Mission and Home Mission.

### *2.2.2 The 69<sup>th</sup> General Assembly*

Rev. Feenstra and br. G. VanWoudenberg attended the 69<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the OPC, held in Wenham, Mass., in June 2002. Interesting for us to note is that the G.A. invited the ERQ to enter into 'corresponding relations' with the OPC. It was also reported that the CEIR had extensive discussions on a number of issues with the URCNA.

It will be good to give some attention in the future to two reports that will be submitted to the 70<sup>th</sup> G.A., to be held in 2003: The report of the Committee on Revisions of the Directory for Worship, and the report of the Committee on Views of Creation.

### *2.2.3 The OPC and the URCNA*

The CEIR is willing to share with us documents and other relevant information that show the progress in the discussion between the OPC and the United Reformed Churches. From their side the CEIR would like to see the results and conclusions of the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA.

### *2.2.4 Meeting with the CEIR on April 15, 2003*

Our first and only meeting (since Synod Neerlandia) with the CEIR was held on April 15, 2003 in Hamilton. The report of this meeting is included in this report as an appendix. The CEIR had informed us, that they would like to hold their Spring 2003 meeting in Canada, preferably in the Hamilton area. The meeting was held on April 15 and 16 in the Theological College.

In the discussion we focused on two main areas:

How do we read/use/work with the statements we have agreed on as churches concerning the Supervision of the Lord's Supper and Confessional Membership?

What about the future of our discussions, and the goals we want to set for a "long-term agenda" in working toward greater unity?

We had a helpful and clarifying discussion on the issues mentioned under a, which was held in a brotherly atmosphere. We did not come to particular proposals or agreed statements. It was suggested that we appoint a small committee with two members from the CCCA and two from the CEIR to work out and present statements that clarify the terminology we use, and can help us focus in future discussions. No decision was made at the time.

With regard to the possibility to set up a framework and establish goals for a long-term agenda to work toward greater unity, we agreed that it would be helpful to identify areas of priority with points to discuss. A letter will be sent with suggestions.

The CEIR has adopted a rotating schedule for meeting annually with one of the churches in North America with whom the OPC is in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. This could mean that the CCCA would only meet with the CEIR every five years (after 2003 the first time in 2008!), which would make it very difficult for the CCCA to fulfill the mandates of our General Synods. The OPC brothers explained that this structure is the required minimum, and that we can meet beyond that, as often as we deem necessary and beneficial.

#### 2.2.5 Recommendations

The Committee recommends that Synod Chatham decide

- to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church under the adopted rules.
- to instruct the CCCA to continue the discussions on the existing differences in confession and church polity, and to work toward further unity with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

### 2.3 *l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec*

#### 2.3.1 *The Mandate of Synod Neerlandia*

The mandate of Synod Neerlandia, *to continue developing closer ties with the ERQ with the goal of establishing ecclesiastical fellowship (...) by fulfilling the following mandate: 1. to discuss the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards, with priority on the issues of pulpit supervision, fencing of the Lord's Table, and confessional accountability...*, caused some discussion in the meetings of the subcommittee east. It was not clear whether reaching the goal of "establishing ecclesiastical fellowship" was to be dependent on the complete fulfillment of the instruction in 5.4.1. It seemed fair to make a comparison with what happened in our relationship with the OPC.

With regard to the OPC Synod concluded that the need for continued discussion should not prevent the establishing of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, which was possible when a basic agreement with the OPC was reached on the Fencing of the Lord's Table and Confessional Membership.

Our conclusion as committee was, therefore, that, if we could come to a similar understanding on these issues with the ERQ, we could possibly

move towards Ecclesiastical Fellowship. This would then also include the willingness to continue the discussion on the existing differences.

One of the difficulties the committee anticipated was that the Interchurch Relations Committee of the ERQ did not have a mandate to deal with these matters. The ERQ Synod had decided not to enter into discussions on issues that were not being raised by the consistories within the ERQ.

We presented the decisions of General Synod Neerlandia to the Interchurch Relations Committee of the ERQ, and invited the brothers for a meeting to discuss together how to proceed in fulfilling the instructions of our synods. For a long time there was no response.

### *2.3.2 Meeting with ERQ representatives on August 13, 2002*

Due to a significant turnover in the composition of the ERQ Committee for Interchurch Relations (all 4 members were replaced) our correspondence was misplaced, and for a while we had some trouble contacting the right persons.

Then, on August 13, 2002, we were able to arrange a meeting with two representatives of the ERQ, members of the Interchurch Relations Committee: Rev. Bernard Westerveld and br. Philippe DeBlois. At this meeting we spent some time discussing our mandate, *to discuss the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standard, with priority on pulpit supervision, fencing of the table, and confessional accountability.*

We clarified that the way that led up to Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC shows that the need to discuss the differences between the various reformed confessions should not prevent us from coming to Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Decisive is the willingness to continue this discussion, so that these differences do not disappear from the agenda, once Ecclesiastical Fellowship has been established.

The brothers of the ERQ informed us that they do not have a mandate to discuss the issues identified in the decision of Synod Neerlandia as issues that should have priority. However, the matters of the Fencing of the Lord's Supper and Confessional Membership are now under study. This is a step forward, compared to the response of the ERQ to the decision of Synod Fergus 1998.

The ERQ brothers stressed the desire of the ERQ to continue striving for Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC. They were also wondering what had happened to the option of "federative unity"? This matter had come up in their discussions with the URC committee, since for the URCNA "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" as phase 2 in their ecumenical relations, is a stepping stone for federative unity.

### *2.3.3 Further Developments*

Early in 2003 the committee was informed that the ERQ Synod of

September 2002 had instructed its Interchurch Relations Committee *to discuss with the CanRC the following three points of divergence as soon as Synod has pronounced itself on them: a) the Lord's Supper, b) the Supervision of the Pulpit, and c) the adherence to the confession by the members of the ERQ.*

We were also informed that the ERQ Synod of March 2003 was supposed to deal with a report and proposal on the Supervision of the Lord's Supper. We wrote to the Interchurch Relations Committee that we welcomed with thankfulness the expressed willingness of the ERQ to discuss these matters, as a new direction in our contacts with the ERQ. But we suggested at the same time that perhaps it would be more beneficial for the relationship between our churches, if we would be able to interact with the report and proposal on the Lord's Supper, and discuss these matters, before the ERQ Synod would make a final decision.

The result was that the ERQ Synod did not make a final decision concerning the questions of the Lord's Supper and Confessional Membership, so that these matters will continue to be studied.

We have expressed our appreciation for this course of action, and have offered to facilitate the discussion by providing them with copies several documents that were produced in our discussions with the OPC on these issues.

That was in April 2003, and we hope to be able to meet again and discuss these topics. Hopefully we can then come to a similar agreement as was reached with the OPC, which would provide the framework for further discussions and growth within the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

#### *2.3.4 Goals*

As committee we also want to emphasize that Ecclesiastical Fellowship should not be seen as goal in itself. More important is the aim to support the churches in Quebec in their spiritual growth and their establishment as fully reformed churches, theologically and practically rooted in the Word of God and the reformed confessions. Ecclesiastical Fellowship can support this, but it is not a condition for it. It is good to realize that appreciation for the reformed heritage will grow slowly. In this light we want to stress that the practical and supportive approach of the CanRC in Owen Sound has proven to be very helpful and beneficial. The council of the Owen Sound CanRC kept us informed about the growing relationship between the congregation in Owen Sound and the ERQ in St. Georges de Beauce through the support for the work of Rev. Paulin Bedard.

Perhaps it would be a good idea to stimulate contacts between local churches, similar to the Owen Sound situation.

#### *2.3.5 Recommendations*

Although we would love to recommend that Synod Chatham decide to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the ERQ, we must say, that so far

not much has changed since Synod Neerlandia 2001. The matters that were to receive priority in our discussions are still being studied by the ERQ.

Therefore the committee recommends that, with regard to the ERQ, Synod Chatham decide to continue the mandate for the CCCA as was given by Synod Neerlandia 2001 in 5.4 of Art. 22 of the Acts.

#### *2.4 Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America*

Synod Neerlandia mandated the CCCA "to contact the KPCNA as per information submitted by the Church at Willoughby Heights". All the information available was a handwritten list of Korean pastors in North and South America (dated March 19, 1998).

Efforts to contact some of the (Canadian) addresses on this list have been fruitless.

The committee recommend that synod decide to discontinue the mandate of the CCCA to contact the Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America

### *3. Subcommittee West*

The subcommittee west of the Synodical Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas dealt with contact with the Igreja Reformada do Brasil (IRB of Brazil), the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico (IPCM), the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), and as it turned out a shared responsibility regarding Synod's mandate pertaining to the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).

#### **3.1 Meetings**

Members of subcommittee West were present at meetings of the full CCCA in Hamilton:

Sep. 2001 was attended by the brs. W. Gortemaker, J. Moesker, and A. Poppe  
 Sep. 2002 attended by the brs. W. Gortemaker, K. Jonker, and J. Moesker

The Sep.2001 full CCCA meeting divided the task of the committee over two sub-committees: one in Ontario and the other in Manitoba. The Sep. 2002 full CCCA meeting discussed the work done so far and made preparations for a full CCCA meeting in May/June 2003 in Manitoba in view of reporting to Synod 2004.

Nine meetings of the Western Subcommittee were held: on Nov. 07, 2001, Jan. 23, 2002, April 10, 2002, June 19, 2002, Sep. 25, 2002, Oct. 30, 2002, Dec 11, 2002, Jan. 22, 2003, and May 29, 2003. Minutes are made of these meetings and the minutes were shared with the brothers of the eastern subcommittee.

On behalf of the Churches, the western subcommittee was represented at the following ecclesiastical assemblies and meetings:

IRB in Brazil 2nd Synod of IRB in Colombo – Parana; held

September 10-14, 2002

delegate: A. Nap (address and reporter).

RCUS in the United States

255th RCUS Synod in Menno SD; held May 14-17, 2001;

fraternal delegates: K. Jonker (the address) and J. Moesker (reporter).  
 256th RCUS Synod in Sutton NE; held May 20-24, 2002;  
 fraternal delegate: W. Gortemaker  
 257th RCUS Synod in Eureka SD; held May 19-23, 2003;  
 fraternal delegates: W. Gortemaker and K. Jonker  
 (the address and reporter)  
 RCUS IRC meeting at Flat Rock NC; held Nov.11, 2002  
 RCUS representatives: M. Koerner, R. Morris, R. Potter, G. Symms  
 CanRef. representatives: W. Gortemaker, K. Jonker, A. Poppe  
 NAPARC  
 28th NAPARC meeting in Flat Rock NC; held 12-13 Nov. 2002.  
 Observer delegates: W. Gortemaker, K. Jonker, A. Poppe

### 3.2 IGREJA REFORMADAS DO BRASIL (IRB)

Synod 2001 mandated the CCCA

*"to maintain contact with the IRB under the adopted rules for ecclesiastical fellowship."*

#### 3.2.1 Ecclesiastical Fellowship

The clerk of Synod 2001 informed us that he had communicated Synod Neerlandia's decision regarding IRB to the Brazilian churches. Our committee interpreted Synod's decision "to offer a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship to the IRB" to mean: to enter into such a relationship with these churches. We considered that the IRB had requested such a relationship. Therefore, we did not deem it necessary to ask them whether they would accept us. Two printed copies of Acts Synod 2001 were sent to them.

The IRB consists of two Regional synods. The Southern Regional Synod includes the churches of Colombo and Unai. The Northern Regional Synod consists of the churches in North-eastern Brazil. In contrast to the churches of the Southern Regional Synod, the churches which form the North-eastern Regional Synod also come together as a classis.

Synod Colombo also accepted a delegation from the not yet instituted missionary church in Maceio. Rev. De Graaf took along with him a number of elders in training in order to provide them with the experience of attending a Synod.

Our committee felt that in the initial stage of our contact with the IRB, it would be most beneficial to involve the Canadian churches conducting mission in Brazil (Surrey Maranatha and Hamilton) in order to fulfill our mandate (e.g. sending greetings via their official visitors and delegates to Brazil). We contacted the sending churches for mission in Brazil, the churches at Hamilton and Surrey. Via these contacts we received information about addresses, the date of their Synod, names of visitors and/or delegates to these churches and to their Synod in Sept. 2002.



When we were informed that brother A. Nap would be travelling to Brazil in September 2002, the committee asked him to represent our churches at their Synod. Brother Nap accepted our request and translated our letter to the IRB Synod into Portuguese.

### 3.2.2 Visit Brother A. Nap

In our letter we sent our fraternal greetings with the prayer that the Head of the church would bless their work for the building up of the churches in Brazil. For clarity sake we repeated our rules for ecclesiastical fellowship.

Furthermore, we requested them to send all relevant information about their churches and Synod meetings (preferably in the English language) to us. We also expressed our desire to hear from them how they would make the relationship between our churches a living matter. Brother Nap served us with a report of his visit.

We received his report with much appreciation.

Brother Nap's report shows that the IRB has enjoyed growth since 1976. The membership now stands at about 500. Synod decided to publish a final version of their Psalter (150 Psalms and 200 Hymns) in four years. Reformed literature is being translated into Portuguese and works of theologians such as VanBruggen, Douma, Trimp, Doekes, and Velema/VanGenderen will become available in that language in future. Our Dutch sister churches (GKV) also have contact with the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB). Synod Zuidhorn however, decided to work towards a tripartite dialogue with the IRB and IPB. Therefore the GKV requested the IRB to clarify their position with regard to the IPB.

IRB's committee for contact with the IPB received the following mandate:

- a. To express thankfulness to the Lord for the fact that the IPB
  - \* has Reformed confessions and publicly confesses the Reformed faith;
  - \* took a firm stand and condemned the heresies of Samuel Doutorian;
  - \* took a firm position with regard to Freemasonry;
  - \* is not continuing relationships with liberal church organizations.
- b. To express concern as well as sadness about
  - \* the IPB's membership of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). Via WARC the IPB is in contact with very liberal churches;
  - \* the hierarchical structure of the IPB. This hierarchy reduces the prime responsibility of elders and allows for a concentration of power in a few persons.
- c. To inquire about:
  - \* the position of serving ministers who are members of free Masonic organizations;
  - \* possible tolerance of liberal and/or Pentecostal teachings at some of the six seminaries.

According to brother Nap, it is not possible to equate the OPC and the IPB in policies concerning the church order. The IPB has an extremely hierarchical structure.

Brother Nap hoped “that the Canadian Reformed Churches will not strive for parallel discussions with the IPB. As an independent church federation, the IRB is entitled to solve an issue that is primarily Brazilian.” Our Committee shares this opinion.

In 2000, IRB members who were in training at the IPB seminary in Recife, discontinued their studies at this institution. At present these seminarians receive theological training from the missionaries A. deGraaf, E. Venema, and K. Wieske. This ad-hoc program is only for the seminarians who have studied in Recife. This project is financed by supporting churches in Hamilton and Surrey, as well as by the GKV in the Netherlands.

Synod Colombo decided to approve this ad-hoc project, which previously had been accepted by the member churches. Synod also formulated a mandate for a new committee. This committee has to formulate plans for the post ad-hoc situation.

Brother Nap also reported that the IRB has become more indigenous! “Before, some committees exclusively consisted of ‘foreigners’. Now some missionaries are ‘only’ “conselheiros.”

Finally brother Nap made the following observations:

- \* The contact with IRB will, for a substantial part, remain a committee-level contact.
- \* It is mandatory to send Portuguese-speaking observers to future Brazilian synods.
- \* There are natural contacts between members of the two federations:
  - a teacher from Maragogi is studying in Vancouver;
  - a youth group from the Fraser Valley is preparing to help with the construction of the church in Iburá (Recife);
  - brother Nap will assist in professional development for Brazilian teachers.

In mid-February, 2002, members from the Winnipeg churches (Gerry Kuik, John Kuik, Jake & Darlene Kuik) visited Brazil. They also passed on our greetings. The visitors returned with an enthusiastic report that the Brazilian churches are doing well under the blessings of the Lord. In particular in Recife there seems to be a hunger for the Reformed faith.

### 3.2.3 Evaluation of our contact with IRB

The contact we had with IRB was an indirect contact. This was done on purpose as reported above. As long as churches within our federation have close ties with IRB through mission work, our ecclesiastical contact can naturally be exercised via those churches and/or representatives.

### 3.2.4 Recommendations:

*Synod: 1. express gratitude for growth and a positive development in the IRB*

*2. mandate the CCCA to maintain contact with the IRB under the adopted rules for ecclesiastical fellowship*

### 3.3 INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES IN MEXICO (IPCM)

Synod 2001 mandated the CCCA "to further investigate the IPCM."

The committee began to carry out its mandate by studying the "supporting documents" mentioned in Article 37 of Acts 2001. Several contact persons were identified who might be contacted to request information about the IPCM. However, those who responded to our letters requesting further contact with the IPCM did not give us pertinent information. The main respondents to our correspondence were Dr. C. VanDam and Dr. John Paul Roberts, former Presbyterian missionary in Mexico. In December 2001 Dr. VanDam visited Mexico and met Rev. Noh. A report van Prof. VanDam's visit has been published in *Clarion* Vol.51 #8.

#### 3.3.1 Correspondence

Numerous attempts were made to obtain the address of someone whom we would call the secretary of contact with churches abroad or a member of an interchurch relations committee. Letters, faxes and emails were hardly responded to. Short responses only referred us to other addresses. For example, a letter was written to Rev. Tah y Noh, asking him to help our committee regarding the following points:

1. How do we best develop a relationship with the IPCM?
2. Is there an Inter Church Relationship Committee appointed by the IPCM?
3. If there is not a Committee would the IPCM appoint one so that our relationship could be developed on an official basis?
4. Do you have information on the IPCM for us to peruse?
5. Are there statistics available on the IPCM Federation regarding churches, members, contacts, etc.?
6. What are the confessional standards? If available, would you be able to send them to us?

This letter to Rev. Noh was faxed and mailed separately. No response was received.

In December, 2002, we received a communication from Dr. Roberts which seemed to indicate that the bonds between him and the IPCM had been strengthened again. This communication informed us about the appointment of Rev. Misael Custodio as chairman of their Inter Church Relations Committee.

He is a person who can speak English. A letter was sent at once to Rev. Custodio. His reply brought us back to square one since we are redirected to another contact person.

Another letter was received from Dr. J.P. Roberts who has apparently taken upon himself to function "ex officio" as a liaison between IPCM and us. He informed us that our letter had been forwarded to the right person and that answers were forthcoming. Our correspondence with this person have to date remained fruitless.

The RCUS has had the same problem in contacts with the IPCM as we encountered. For some years they were in ecclesiastical fellowship with the IPCM. However, they too received no responses to their correspondence.

This year the IRC of the RCUS reported to Synod: "As reported last year, we do not believe that there is sufficient warrant to re-institute an active fraternal relationship between the RCUS and the IPCM. They have not responded to our inquiries regarding the way such a relationship would function. In light of this your Committee recommends, "(...) that the Stated Clerk of Synod write to the IPCM and inform them that we are terminating our fraternal relationship with them in light of the impracticalities preventing fruitful interaction, and that we pray God's blessings upon them in the church-gathering work of Christ."

RCUS Synod 2003 adopted this recommendation.

### 3.3.2 Evaluation of our contact with IPCM

We have been unable to establish any real meaningful contact with the IPCM.

### 3.3.3 Recommendations:

*Synod declare that:*

1. *at this time there is no reason to actively pursue an ecclesiastical relationship with the IPCM ;*
2. *CCCA will report to Synod 2007 about any further contact with the IPCM*

### 3.4 THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES (RCUS)

Synod Neerlandia 2001 mandated the CCCA: *First: "to continue the discussion on the issues noted in the Considerations of Acts Art.59.*

#### 4.2 - Lord's Day observance

#### 4.4 - Lord Supper to shut-ins

#### 4.5 - *speaking about the Church in the language of the Three Forms of Unity" Second: "to instruct the CCCA to communicate this decision (Art. 59, 5.1 - 5.11) and its implications to the RCUS."*

The contact with the RCUS occupied most of the time and work of the western subcommittee. We did our utmost to attend their annual Synod meetings with as many of our committee members as possible. In 2002 the RCUS Synod at Sutton NE and Regional Synod West of the Canadian Reformed Churches were held on the same date. Three of our committee members were delegated to Regional Synod West, therefore only one delegate, brother W. Gortemaker, attended the RCUS Synod 2002. Reports of these visits are written and published in Clarion. After Synod Neerlandia 2001 we have been received at RCUS Synods as fraternal delegates, which means that we have all the privileges of the floor (except the right to vote).

In Dec. 2001 the clerk of our subcommittee approached the Classes of our churches that were closest to the RCUS Classis. He proposed to have this classical contact as follows:

- \* Classis Ontario South with RCUS Covenant East Classis
- \* Classis Manitoba with RCUS Northern Plains Classis

- \* Classis Alberta with RCUS South Central Classis
- \* Classis Pacific East with the RCUS Western Classis

Reports from these Classes show that this contact is growing. Ministers from Manitoba have been involved in a RCUS ministers' conference in Mitchell SD and have preached in the RCUS church at Minot, ND. There has also been exchange of representatives between Classis Pacific East of the Canadian Reformed Churches and RCUS Western Classis.

#### 3.4.1 RCUS Synods 2001 and 2002

We have been invited to send delegates to each synod of the RCUS. During the RCUS Synods we have had good interaction with their delegates to Synod and especially with the members of their Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC).

We actively participated in the work of the RCUS Committee for Ecumenicity, which makes recommendations for the discussion on Synod floor. The RCUS brothers welcomed and appreciated our presence and participation at their Synods. From our side we enjoyed being among them experiencing the oneness in the Reformed faith.

At the closing date of Synod Neerlandia, 2001, we began to carry out our mandate regarding the RCUS. On that same day we arrived in Menno, SD, where the RCUS was holding its 255th Synod from May 14-17, 2001. In our address to this Synod we once again introduced our churches, brought forward the issues we have been mandated to discuss, and passed on the rules under which we maintain ecclesiastical fellowship (the rules of Lincoln 1992). The address was well received and published in their church paper, the *Reformed Herald*.

At the RCUS Synod 2001 in Menno SD, Rev. G. Syms, their delegate to our Synod Neerlandia 2001, gave an extensively oral report concerning the workings and decisions of our synod. Synod Neerlandia's decisions concerning the RCUS have clearly been communicated to the RCUS.

Furthermore, from 2001 the issues for ongoing discussion with the RCUS have been mentioned in the IRC reports to the Synods. In their report to Synod 2002 we read:

"Your Committee notes that regarding 4.5 the RCUS adopted the 5 principles contained in the church unity paper but not the paper itself (1999 Abstract p.42-49), which contains some language more in line with the Westminster Standards than the Three Forms of Unity. This is the concern of our CanRef brethren. Your Committee would welcome this discussion with our CanRef brethren as part of our mutual working together in ecclesiastical fellowship. Your Committee believes that the RCUS paper on church unity needs to be adopted as well as the principles but recognizes that this paper will need some fine-tuning before it is presented to Synod. In consideration of the mandate given to the CCCA by Synod Neerlandia your Committee expects to meet sometime this year with the CCCA at the sub-committee level."

### 3.4.2 The Flat Rock Meeting

Three brothers of the western subcommittee attended a meeting with the Interchurch Committee of the RCUS in Flat Rock, North Carolina on Nov. 11, 2002. The venue of this meeting was chosen in connection with the meeting of NAPARC on Nov.12 and 13.

At our October 2003 subcommittee meeting we formulated our thoughts regarding the issues to be discussed with the RCUS as per our mandate. This memo was used as a guideline for the discussion, which was held in an open and brotherly atmosphere, seeking to serve and to build one another up in the faith. From this discussion we report the following (see also appended report):

#### 1. *Re Lord's Day Observance*

How we maximize our devotion to the Lord on His day is an important facet in the life of the Christian. The RCUS brothers proposed to bring forward to their synod, when approved by their Inter Church Relations Committee, a request regarding how to interpret Lord's Day 38: "...that, especially on the day of rest, I diligently attend the church of God..." It was emphasized that, for the sake of the Lord's honour, both federations need one another's help to maintain a Biblical view of the day of rest, fully using the means of grace, that is, the Word of God.

#### 2. *Re Lord's Supper to shut-ins*

The practice in the RCUS is that in some congregations the Lord's Supper is celebrated with long-term shut-ins under the supervision of the consistory. Office bearers and often some members of the congregation are in attendance and celebrate the Lord's Supper with the shut-ins. This celebration usually occurs on the same Lord's Day that the entire congregation partakes of the food and drink in remembrance of Him. We noted that this practice takes place in one of our own congregations in this manner: at the time the celebration is held, an elder and a deacon go to the shut-ins next door who are connected via closed circuit TV. In another congregation they have approved this method in principle, but have not yet exercised it.

#### 3. *Confessional language in Church Unity Paper, etc.*

In their reports to the last two RCUS Synods the IRC members wrote that the RCUS Church Unity Paper needs "fine-tuning." In the discussion the brothers explained what they meant with this phrase. "Fine-tuning" needs to be done to align the document more with their own adopted confession, being the Three Forms of Unity. The Inter Church Relations Committee will pursue this task and make its proposals to the RCUS Synod for adoption.

#### 4. *Other topics discussed at the Flat Rock meeting:*

- a. The admission of guests to the Table of the Lord. The use of attestations within the Canadian Reformed Churches was explained.
- b. The actual bringing to practice of our ecclesiastical fellowship with one another. Our churches need to be reminded that our relationship with the RCUS is a sister church relationship which

- includes the privilege of participating in the discussions.
- c. The RCUS brothers asked us whether the teachings of the New Perspective on Paul (E.P. Sanders and NT Wright), and the teachings of Norman Shepherd on the covenant have found inroads in the Canadian Reformed Churches.
  - d. Some concrete suggestions for cooperation were made: Youth/family camps, Theological College, and pulpit exchanges.

Under the heading of Churches in Fraternal Relations the RCUS' IRC reported our Flat Rock discussions to Synod Eureka 2003 of the RCUS as follows:

**Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRef):**

A subcommittee met with the Canadian Reformed Churches on 11-11-02, just before the meeting of NAPARC, in Flat Rock, NC, at Bonclarken, which is the Conference Center of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. (ARP). Our arrangements dovetailed in such a way that our RCUS subcommittee consisting of George Syms, Ron Potter, Maynard Koerner (as well as Ron Morris) could spend ample time with the CanRef brothers, Rev. K. Jonker, Elders Bill Gortemaker and Art Poppe. The items of discussion were noted in last year's report per the CanRef mandate, "*To continue the contact with the RCUS by the CCA with a mandate to continue the discussion on the issues noted in the Considerations 4.2; 4.4; 4.5. (Acts of General Synod Neerlandia, p.64).*" (...)

Discussion of Lord's Day Observance. There was a discussion concerning the preference for 2 services from the CanRef side. The principle is that this helps us observe the day as the Lord's Day. We agreed that there was a need to further study the application of Heidelberg Catechism Question 103. The discussion also included the principle that spiritual rest was not the only thing in view in Q/A 103. The day itself is addressed in the RCUS Constitution in that desecration of the day warrants discipline.

Lord's Supper to Shut-ins. The RCUS practice was explained. A concern was expressed to the CanRef brethren for shut-ins to have the privilege of communion at the Lord's Table. The RCUS men explained that to cut off the elderly/shut-ins from the Lord's Table is tantamount to excommunication. We also explained that the minister and at least one elder is always present in order that 'sacramentalism' is avoided. A brief exposition of the Word is given, and the form in the Directory of Worship followed. Fencing the Lord's Table was also discussed in light of the experience of a CanRef minister in one of our churches. It was noted that the RCUS would admit members of a Bible believing church in good standing and agree with our teaching concerning the meaning of the Sacrament. RCUS members are welcome at CanRef Churches for Communion if they have some proof of membership, i.e., an attestation that such persons are members in good standing in their local RCUS church.

Confessional Language in the RCUS paper on church unity. The CanRef brethren were interested as to what we meant by "fine tuning" this paper (per last year's report). The RCUS brothers agreed that there was a need to clarify statements in support of the principles of church unity. It was noted that CanRef and RCUS have the same view of the church if that view is based on the Three Forms of Unity. The discussion focussed on the need for the doctrine of church unity, and therefore, the need for our principles for the same to reflect the teaching of the Three Forms of Unity.

The IRC subcommittee also asked about the influence of Norman Shepherd and the New Perspective on Paul in the CanRef Churches. We discussed the protocol for reception and seating of delegates to their assemblies. It was also discussed as to how we might promote a greater ecclesiastical fellowship. It was thought that this fellowship might be promoted by our continued exchange of delegates at Synods, Classes, also pulpit exchanges, and Youth Camps/Conferences.

Two recommendations were made to Synod 2003:

**Recommendation #1:** That Synod erect a committee to study and report on the application of Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 103, i.e., the Lord's Day and how it should be observed in our churches.

**Recommendation #2:** That Synod recommend to the churches the desirability of fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, via pulpit exchange, visiting CanRef Churches, and invitations to youth camps/conferences held by the various Classes.

### 3.4.3 RCUS Synod 2003

At Synod Eureka 2003 the delegates of our subcommittee (W. Gortemaker and Rev. K. Jonker) were seated as fraternal delegates. K. Wezeman was present as fraternal delegate from our sister churches in the Netherlands (GKV). The fraternal delegate from the OPC was Rev. W.V. Picknally. Rev. Ralph Pontier was observer on behalf of the United Reformed Churches in North America.

Our address to the RCUS Synod emphasized that as sister churches we need to teach, to admonish one another to the honour of our holy God (Philip.2:12 and Coloss.3:16). We are people with the same Reformed background, having the same love for the truth and the Reformed confessions. The Head of the Church has placed us on one another's way. Besides the address to Synod, we also participated in the discussions on the floor of Synod, in particular regarding the recommendations pertaining to the issues of our Synod Neerlandia 2001.

At RCUS synods a committee prepares the agenda items for debate and decision by Synod. At RCUS Synods this committee has the name "Ecumenical Committee." Our delegates as well as the GKV delegate fully participated in the discussion regarding Lord's Day observance, the Lord's Supper to shut-ins, the confessional language of the Church Unity paper. The



Ecumenical Committee accepted the recommendations of the IRC and added a third, namely that the IRC be mandated to revise the language of the Church Unity paper by using the language of the Three Forms of Unity.

The recommendation regarding Sunday observance created a lively debate on the floor of Synod, which showed that there is no unanimous mind-set among the RCUS brothers. As fraternal delegates we took part in the debate and emphasized that in our time and age a study regarding the application of the 4th commandment would be very beneficial for Christ's Church. A great number of members of Synod were of the same opinion, however the recommendation was defeated by 26 in favour and 42 against. The other two recommendations were accepted.

Noteworthy regarding RCUS interchurch relations is also the contact with the United Reformed Churches. The IRC reported to Synod 2003 that they had a meeting with URC representatives, Rev. Todd Joling and Rev. Ralph Pontier.

Matters such as the following were discussed:

- a. the RCUS view and place of the Holy Scriptures
- b. creeds and confessions;
- c. formula of subscription on confessions;
- d. significant factors in the two federations' history, theology and ecclesiology;
- e. church order and polity;
- f. liturgy and liturgical forms;
- g. preaching, sacraments, and discipline;
- h. theological education for ministers.

Rev. R. Pontier was at the RCUS as the official observer of the URC. In his address he informed Synod that their committee would propose to formally recognize the RCUS as true churches of the Lord and to enter into fraternal relations with them. Rev. Pontier emphasized the need of organizational unity between their churches, since we need one another. "Iron sharpens iron!" Synod decided to foster closer contact with the URC through pulpit exchanges and attending each other's church events.

In his address the OPC fraternal delegate spoke about the good contact between their churches. He commended the RCUS for their position papers such as the one on Women in The Military. He informed Synod that at the moment the OPC is studying that topic as well.

Upon recommendation of the IRC and the Ecumenical committee Synod Eureka also decided to ratify the reception of the ERQ into NAPARC.

Other agenda items at RCUS Synod were: Publications and Christian Education providing good biblical Sunday School materials; the publication of a new Hymn book; Mission: church planting in 9 locations and foreign mission in Congo and Kenya; Training for the Ministry; Ministerial Aid Fund organizational matters like the official RCUS Website; the RCUS church paper the *Reformed Herald*; the President's report and the report of the

Stated Clerk. An overture at this Synod proposed to have Synods one every two years. A committee was appointed to study this matter. A report on Covenant Education was adopted. This is a laudable effort in verbalizing the need for covenant education. How the RCUS will give practical form to this report remains to be seen.

RCUS Synod 2003 was also overtured to refute the teachings of Harold Camping regarding the Church and the teachings of Prof. Norman Shepherd regarding justification and works. Neither of these men are RCUS members, but their teachings are considered influential. Synod decided to condemn the teachings of Harold Camping and call him to repentance. The Shepherd matter was referred to a committee that is to study the issue of justification and works.

Much time is spent at RCUS Synods listening to visitors from educational institutions such as Dordt College and various Theological seminaries. This could change if the RCUS had a church seminary. At the moment a special committee is examining "the feasibility, procedures, and criteria necessary to the establishment of an RCUS seminary."

Finally, at the 257th Synod the report of the Special Committee to Study Nominations of Officers evoked an interesting discussion in which we participated as fraternal delegates. According to the RCUS constitution, new office bearers are nominated by the consistory. However, according to Article 48 the congregation also may nominate one additional person at the congregational meeting. When it was pointed out that the church is not a democracy but a Christocracy, one of the writers of the report said: ...nor is the church an aristocracy! All the members have the Holy Spirit; and our history proves that Consistories are not infallible. The report provided ample references from Scripture, Confession and their Constitution in regard to the legitimacy of having nominations from the floor at congregational meetings.

This matter of nomination shows the difference in church polity between the RCUS and the Canadian Reformed Churches. In RCUS church polity there are five ecclesiastical assemblies: the Congregational Meeting, the Consistory (elders and deacons), Spiritual council (elders only), Classis and Synod. They do not all have ecclesiastical jurisdiction, yet they are considered ruling assemblies.

This is also a reason why women are not permitted to vote in the RCUS. A Congregational meeting can make decisions regarding general organizational matters such as property issues and making one nomination for new office bearers as we learned from the above-mentioned discussion. This discussion confirmed our observation in earlier years that the RCUS church polity is a hybrid of the Church Order of Dort and Presbyterian Form of Church Government.

At this Synod the messages of sermons and meditations centered on the theme of being people and servants of the living Word: 1Cor 3 - *God, His*

*Ministers, and His congregation* by Rev.V. Pollema; 2Cor 4 - *The ministry of the Glorious Gospel*, by Rev. J. Merika; Deut.29:29 - *The future is God's business* by Rev. J. West; 2 Kings 13 - *The living bread: The Word makes alive!* by Rev. K. Sorenso; 1 Cor.9:27 - *Preach and Practice the Gospel* by Rev. M. McGee.

#### 3.4.4 Evaluation of our contact with the RCUS

As can be seen from the above, the issues mandated for discussion with the RCUS by Synod 2001 have received ample attention. We were happy to hear that regarding the matter of the Lord's Supper the RCUS is very much aware of the danger of sacramentalism. We consider the manner in which they administer the Lord's Supper to shut-ins as acceptable. This issue may also warrant some consideration among Canadian Reformed churches.

It is, of course, regrettable that the RCUS could not see its way clear in establish-ing a study committee regarding the Lord's Day issue. However, we regard the discussion we had with the brothers as very valuable. It has raised the aware-ness that the proclamation of the living Word must be central on the Day of the Lord, and that the rest of the Lord's Day must be used to God's honour and glory.

From the foregoing it is clear that we have dealt with the matter of the Lord's Day observance extensively to the point that it was raised at their Synod level. The RCUS desires to observe the Lord's Day from a scriptural basis. How this is best put into practice is a matter of discussion and agreement of what God requires of us in His Word. Differences in practice exist. Yet, we need to hold out to each other the holiness of the Lord's Day. Therefore, uniformity of practice would be most desirable. We seek direction from Synod how we should further speak with the RCUS in respect to the Lord's Day observance.

We are thankful for RCUS' decision to officially mandate the IRC to revise RCUS Church Unity paper in the language of the Three Forms of Unity.

Finally, we are convinced that the RCUS is a church of the Lord Jesus Christ in which His Spirit actively works for the mutual edification of Christ's people. It will be our continued mandate to take our ecclesiastical relationship very seriously.

#### 3.4.5 Recommendations

*Synod:*

1. *express gratitude to the Lord for the positive development of our ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCUS.*
2. *take note of the extensive discussions with the RCUS re the Lord's Day observance, and if Synod deems it necessary provide the CCCA with specific issues re the Lord's Day observance which still must be addressed.*
3. *take note of the practise of the RCUS to administer Lord's Supper to shut-ins.*

4. *take note that the IRC of the RCUS is mandated to revise their Church Unity paper, bringing the language of this paper more in line with the language of the Three Forms of Unity.*
5. *encourage our Classes to take up/keep contact with the Classis of the RCUS bordering their area as proposed by the CCCA on December 2001.*
6. *recommend to the churches the desirability of actively pursuing our ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCUS via pulpit exchange, visiting RCUS churches, and invitations to youth camps/conferences held by the various churches.*

### 3.5 NORTH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COUNCIL (NAPARC)

Synod 2001 mandated the CCCA: *“To send an observer at our own discretion to future meetings of NAPARC to investigate its usefulness and possible membership of this organization.”*

The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council began in 1975. Present member churches are: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), L’Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ), Korean-American Presbyterian Church (KAPC, with ties to the Hapdong churches in Korea), Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Reformed Church in the U.S. (RCUS), Reformed Presbyterian Church of NA (RPCNA). The Christian Reformed Church was a founding member, but has since been expelled for accepting unbiblical teachings.

#### 3.5.1 NAPARC’s basis, purpose and function, its authority and membership (taken from its constitution).

Confessing Jesus Christ as only Savior and Sovereign Lord over all of life, the member churches “affirm **the basis** of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts and to its teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms. That the adopted basis of fellowship be regarded as warrant for the establishment of a formal relationship of the nature of the council, that is, a fellowship that enables the constituent churches to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another and hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.”

The **purpose and function** of this council has been delineated as follows:

1. Facilitate discussion and consultation between member bodies on those issues and problems, which divide them as well as on those, which they face in common and by the sharing of insights “communicate advantages to one another” (Institutes IV, 2, 1).
2. Promote the appointment of joint committees to study matters of common interest and concern.
3. Exercise mutual concern in the perpetuation, retention, and propagation of the Reformed faith.

4. Promote cooperation wherever possible and feasible on the local and denominational level in such areas as missions, relief efforts, Christian schools, and church education.

As far as **the authority of this council** is concerned, it is understood that all actions and decisions taken are advisory in character and in no way curtail or restrict the autonomy of the member bodies.

**Membership** in NAPARC is granted or suspended according to the following rules:

- \* Those churches shall be eligible for membership, which profess and maintain the basis for fellowship expressed in the basis and that maintain the marks of the true church (pure preaching of the gospel, the Scriptural administration of the sacraments, the faithful exercise of discipline).
- \* Admission to, suspension from, restoration to (after suspension), and termination of membership shall be proposed by the Council to the member churches by two thirds of the ballots cast; this proposal must then be approved within three years by two thirds of the major assemblies of the member churches. A proposal to suspend or terminate the membership of a member church may be initiated only by a major assembly of a member church. A suspended church may send delegates to meetings of the Council but they shall not vote nor may that church be represented on the Interim Committee.

### 3.5.2 NAPARC Meeting November, 2002

In November 2002, three members of the CCCA, brothers W. Gortemaker (from Winnipeg Redeemer), Rev. K. Jonker (from Winnipeg Grace), A. Poppe (from Carman West), travelled to North Carolina to meet with the Inter Church Relations Committee of the RCUS.

This council meeting dealt with the following agenda items: reports of member churches, reports of observers, report about the various distinctives of the member churches, the membership position of the CRC in NAPARC, the Report *Women in the military*, and the reception of the ERQ as member church.

The roll call showed that all member churches were represented. Each member church may send four delegates. ARPC, OPC and RCUS had 4 delegates, KAPC had 3 and PCA as well as RPCNA had each 2 delegates present, bringing the total to 19 official representatives of the member churches.

Four Observer Churches were present: Canadian Reformed Churches (3 delegates), L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec (2 delegates), the Presbyterian Reformed Church (2 delegates), and the United Reformed Churches of North America (1 delegate).

The agenda of this NAPARC meeting was dealt with in an expedient manner. After each church had given a report of their actual church life with

its joys and concerns, a member of the NAPARC commended the reporting church in prayer to God. At this Council meeting the expulsion of the CRCNA was confirmed by all the member churches. The Council accepted ERQ into membership.

### 3.5.3 Evaluation re NAPARC

At the 2002 council meeting of NAPARC we observed that representatives of various churches met one another on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. The participating churches, however, go still their different ecclesiastical ways. It must be stated though that the churches are willing to speak about their differences. The OPC, for example, announced that they desire face-to-face meetings with their NAPARC partners about the issues, which divide them. This announcement and the listing of their differences show that the member churches want to carry out the basis of NAPARC: that the churches commit themselves to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another and hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice. The RCUS in particular emphasized the need for closer ties and unity.

The Canadian Reformed observers were well received at the NAPARC meeting they attended. In their report to Synod 2003, the IRC of the RCUS wrote (after they mentioned the receiving of ERQ into membership): "We also were glad for the attendance at NAPARC of three observers (Rev. K. Jonker, Elders Bill Gortemaker, and Art Poppe) from the Canadian Reformed Churches. The report of Rev. K. Jonker, introducing the Canadian Reformed Churches, was given to the Council."

Now that the ERQ has joined NAPARC, three churches with which we have close contact are members of the Council. The action, which NAPARC took pertaining to the CRCNA shows this council does wish to maintain its confessional basis. We cannot object to this basis, as it is similar to the basis of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) of which the Canadian Reformed Churches are charter member.

So, membership may be useful to provide support to our sister churches OPC and RCUS in NAPARC, to express greater unity with the ERQ with which we seek ecclesiastical fellowship, and to fulfill the biblical calling to foster unity with other Reformed churches.

Our membership of NAPARC is also possible in that we could subscribe to its Scriptural basis and constitution.

NAPARC will meet again in Philadelphia PA in November 2003. We plan to attend this meeting as observers and provide a supplementary report.

However, since only some of the CCCA members have attended a single meeting of NAPARC at this time, and some may attend one more meeting in the future, it would seem too hasty to request membership at this point.

### 3.5.4 Recommendations

We recommend that Synod give the CCCA the following mandate:

*Continue to send observers to NAPARC to make recommendation to the next Synod concerning membership in this body.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Jan DeGelder  
Rev. Peter Feenstra  
Bill Gortemaker  
Rev. Klaas Jonker  
Leo Knegt  
Rev. Jack Moesker  
Bill Oostdyk  
Art Poppe  
Gerry VanWoudenberg

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