

and without, etc. This is to say that no official structure will be able to guarantee, in and of itself, sound training and, indirectly, sound leadership for the churches.

The URCNA church order articles that are relevant to theological education are Articles 3 – 7. Article 3 in particular speaks to this: “Competent men should be urged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man who is a member of a church of the federation and who aspires to the ministry must evidence godliness to his Consistory, which shall assume supervision of all aspects of his training, including his licensure to exhort, and assure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. The council of his church should ensure that his financial needs are met.”

The URCNA approach assumes that a Reformed theological education can be obtained. Among existing Reformed seminaries, we note that several are staffed by men, a) who are ordained office-bearers of the URC, and b) who are supervised by boards of trustees that maintain high academic standards and *ex animo* subscription to the Reformed creeds of the URCNA. Such faculty members who are ordained ministers in the URCNA are subject not only to their institutions’ oversight through the boards of trustees, but they are also subject to the supervision (oversight and discipline) of their respective consistories. Thus some church oversight now exists in the theological education currently available.

Article 3 of the URCNA church order speaks of the consistories’ responsibility to urge students to seek a reformed theological education. Minimally this would entail directing a student to study at such institutions that are Reformed in character and have demonstrated that they can provide adequate training. Therefore, a great deal of responsibility lies with the local consistories to monitor and evaluate the education being received by such students. Indeed, it is entirely up to the consistory to see to it that a Reformed education is obtained. At the same time, the classis plays an important role by providing concurrence to the declaration that a man is declared a candidate for the ministry, having been properly examined by the classis.

The URCNA church order does not provide for an official seminary, one controlled by the denomination’s assemblies. There does not appear to be any desire among the United Reformed congregations to establish an officially- controlled seminary. The current arrangement seems to be serving the URCNA well.

### **Addendum to the Report Of The Theological Education Subcommittee**

Esteemed Brothers,

In our Report we stated that there had not been a joint meeting of our respective committees and we added, “should that happen we will send you a supplementary report.” Thankfully, we may inform you that on Tuesday, January 13, 2004, such a meeting was held at the Theological College in Hamilton, Ontario. (Please find attached for your information a copy of the Notes of this joint meeting.)

Present at this meeting were: for the URCNA – the Revs. Bradd Nymeyer, Cal Tuininga and the Rev. Prof. Mark Vander Hart; for the CanRC – the Profs. Nicolaas Gootjes and Cornelis Van Dam, the Rev. James Visscher and Mr. Karl J. Veldkamp.

After the opening exercises and the introductions, the secretaries gave an update of the activities of their respective committees. This was followed by a lengthy discussion on the working documents, “Why Do the Canadian Reformed Churches Have Their Own Seminary?” and “Theological Education in the United Reformed Churches.”

Towards the end of the lengthy meeting the following Statements of Agreement were formulated:

1. It is the task of the churches to train ministers;
2. Ministers of the churches must receive sound reformed theological training;
3. As a principle, the training of ministers should be done by ministers;
4. Such training is best accomplished in the context of institutional theological education;
5. It is acknowledged that active involvement of the churches is required for the training of ministers and to protect the confessional integrity of such training, and
6. The churches, i.e., the URCNA and CanRC, should work towards theological education that is properly accountable to the churches.

Seeing that neither committee was fully represented, it was decided that these Statements would circulate among all of the members of the respective committees for their input and approval. On January 23, 2004, we were informed that the URCNA Committee had voted to approve the six statements. As for the CanRC Committee, no dissent was received from the one member not present at the meeting. The result is that both committees have accepted the six Statements of Agreement.

It was decided to meet again on June 15, 2004, in Calgary, Alberta. Such a time and place was deemed to be the best opportunity to meet with the entire URCNA Committee. At that occasion further discussion will take place on the basis of the agreed upon Statements.

Brothers, we are thankful for the work that could be done and the progress that could be made thus far. We do not underestimate the magnitude of the task that faces us; however, in humble dependence on the Lord our God, we shall continue to work towards our goal, namely an agreement on theological education in keeping with the mandate that you have given us. May our gracious God bless your assembly.

For the Committee, the Rev. Dr. James Visscher, Secretary