

Report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity to Synod Chatham 2004

A. MANDATE

The Committee appointed by Synod Neerlandia 2001 received the following mandate:

Re: URCNA

- 1.2.1. To pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the URCNA with a view towards entering the final phase of federative unity;
- 1.2.2. To work closely with the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA;
- 1.2.3. To work closely with the ad-hoc committees re church order and theological education, as well as the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*, consulting with them concerning the progress made;
- 1.2.4. To maintain the rules of Phase Two, as much as it concerns the churches in common (see Art. 73, Consideration 4.6);
- 1.2.5. To make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments with the URCNA;
- 1.2.6. To provide information to the churches at regular intervals;
- 1.2.7. To serve Synod 2004 with a single, comprehensive report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod. This report should be prepared jointly with the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA. This report must also readdress the matter of the definite time frame for federative unity with 2007 as a possible target date;

Re: FRCNA and OCRC

- 1.2.8. To continue dialogue with the FRCNA with a view to promoting federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be with the FRCNA on this path;
- 1.2.9. To represent the Canadian Reformed Churches (when invited) at meetings of the OCRC, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring the possibility of federative unity;
- 1.2.10 To develop a more concrete proposal toward establishing talks with the OCRC;
- 1.2.11 To write a formal letter to the OCRC with a view to pursuing more official talks on the federative level;
- 1.2.12 To make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments with the FRCNA and OCRC;
- 1.2.13 To serve Synod 2004 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

1.3 To give the Committee re: *Church Order* the following mandate:

- 1.3.1. To work closely with the committee re: church order appointed by the URCNA synod;

- 1.3.2. To evaluate the differences between the current church orders of the federations in the light of the Scriptural and Confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Church Order of Dort;
- 1.3.3. To propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort.
- 1.3.4. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
- 1.3.5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.
- 1.4. To give the Committee re: *Theological Education* the following mandate:
 - 1.4.1. To work closely with the committee re: theological education appointed by the URCNA synod;
 - 1.4.2. To evaluate the current situation as to theological education within the CanRC and URCNA;
 - 1.4.3. To develop a proposal concerning theological education within the new federation keeping in mind that:
 - 1.4.3.1. The new federation should retain at least one federational theological school at which the board of governors, the professors and teaching staff are appointed by synod;
 - 1.4.3.2. Attention should be given as to what to do in the case of an aspiring candidate to the ministry who does not have adequate instruction in significant courses in Reformed Doctrine, in Reformed Church Polity, or in Reformed Church History.
 - 1.4.4. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
 - 1.4.5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.
- 1.5. To give the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* the following mandate:
 - 1.5.1 To work closely with the committee re: songbook appointed by the URCNA Synod;
 - 1.5.2. To produce a songbook that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter and other suitable metrical versions, while including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and the reformed Confessions;
 - 1.5.3. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
 - 1.5.4. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

B. THE COMMITTEE AND ITS WORKINGS

During the time since Synod Neerlandia 2001 the work for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity was done mainly by the sub-committees re: Church Order, Theological Education, and Songbook. Thankfully, Synod Escondido 2001 committed itself to working towards federative unity with the CanRC. Hence, the ad hoc committees set out to establish contact, arrange common

meetings, and work together with their counterparts of the URCNA on the execution of their mandate. During this time the Church Order Committee as well as the Songbook Committee published Press Releases of their activities and of the results of their deliberations. The CPEU did not receive any special reports beside the ones published in the various magazines. In the month of September 2003 the CPEU received the reports of the respective ad hoc committees, which constitute the major part of this report of the CPEU.

Since Synod Neerlandia 2001 the members of the CPEU living in Ontario met once with their counterparts of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA, namely on March 12, 2002. In this meeting they touched base on the developments since their respective General Synods 2001 and reported on the various activities in the local congregations. Among these we thankfully observed the fact that in many places pulpit-exchanges between pastors of the URCNA and CanRC are taking places on a regular basis. In the Niagara Peninsula meetings have been held as well, to promote a greater understanding of each other's positions and practices. In view of the fact that the momentum in the work for the promotion of ecclesiastical unity was found among the ad hoc committees, no other meeting of the CPEU and CERCUC was deemed necessary. Also, some of the members of the respective Unity Committees were involved in the activities of the sub-committees, and therefore too busy to engage themselves in other discussions. Hence, nothing worthy of importance could be reported to the churches.

As a continuation to the proceedings followed during the years from 1998-2001, the delegates of the CPEU living in the western provinces pursued the dialogue with the FRCNA with a view to promoting federative unity, as per General Synod's mandate. The reports on their discussions concerning the obstacles with the FRCNA on the path toward this federative unity, and the appendices pertinent to these meetings, are included in this CPEU report. This report of the CPEU contains as well the report of these members on their activities, and their recommendations to General Synod Chatham 2004.

With respect to the contacts with the OCRC, the CPEU cannot report much progress. During the time since GS 2001 we received two invitations, one to the General Synod of the OCRC at Cambridge in the Fall of 2001, which we honoured in the presence of br. F. Westrik, while an invitation to a Classis of the OCRC in Nobleton could not be honoured due to its late notification. As far as General Synod Neerlandia's mandate is concerned, the task to pursue more formal contact and write a formal letter to the OCRC with a view to pursuing more official talks on the federative level, was executed. Due to Dr. De Jong's illness, however, a copy of this letter, together with some other correspondence for the CPEU, has been lost from the files of the committee.

The preparation of this CPEU Report was hampered by the illness of its convenor as well. As per Synod Neerlandia's mandate, the report was submitted to the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA, for its perusal and feedback. It circulated among the members

of the CPEU for confirmation of its recommendations. It was not possible, however, to discuss this report and/or formulate formal recommendations in a meeting with the counterparts of the URCNA. Due to various factors and developments evident from this report, it was impossible as well, to comply with Synod's recommendation "to readdress the matter of the definite time frame for federative unity with 2007 as a possible target date." In view of the extent and nature of the progress reported by the ad hoc committees for Church Order, Theological Education, and Songbook, it may well be concluded that the time until 2007 will be needed to complete the respective mandates given to these committees.

Hence, the CPEU recommends that General Synod Chatham 2004 reiterates the respective mandates of the sub-committees, the mandate of the CPEU for the pursuit of ecclesiastical unity with the URCNA, the mandate to continue dialogue with the FRCNA, and the mandate to explore possibilities of federative unity with the OCRC.

Respectfully submitted,
 Rev. R. Aasman
 Dr. J. De Jong
 Rev. W. den Hollander (temporary secretary)
 Rev. W. Slomp
 Elder P. Van Woudenberg
 Elder F. Westrik.

CPEU Report re Contact with the FRCNA

Mandate:

The CPEU received the following mandate from Synod
 Neerlandia 2001:

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

- 5.1. To acknowledge that the CanRCs have been received into the stage of "limited contact" of the FRCNA unity guidelines at the FRCNA Synod May, 2000, and thank the FRCNA for this initiative.
- 5.2. To receive their delegates at our Synods and send copies of our Acts of Synod to them.
- 5.3. To continue dialogue with the FRCNA with a view to promoting federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be on this path.

The FRCNA define limited contact as follows:

1. The attendance of each other's Synods; visiting delegates attending our Synod may be asked for advice;
2. Sending each other copies of the Acts of Synod;

3. Offering spiritual support consisting of:
 - a. calling attention to each other's spiritual and ecclesiastical problems with mutual efforts, toward Scriptural solutions;
 - b. warning each other of spiritual dangers which arise and which spread and begin to dominate the church of Christ;
 - c. correcting each other in love regarding any slackening in connection with the confession or practice of "the faith once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3);
4. Co-operative activity in areas of common responsibility, for example: offering material support and co-operation or consultation with regard to mission work, theological training, and such like.

The FRCNA explain further:

In connection with the three levels of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Synod's understanding is that establishing level "A" of ecclesiastical fellowship with another federation in no way "makes binding" or "expected" or "necessary" moving towards the other two levels. In other words, establishing "limited contact" form of fellowship does not necessarily require moving towards the next level of contact, while it does open the door for such development under God's blessing. Synod sees level "A" primarily as a communicatory level in an official and brotherly manner." (Appendix 15 of the CPEU Report to Synod Neerlandia 2001)

Activities

Since Synod Neerlandia, 2001 representatives of the CPEU attended three of their annual general Synods. Since the FRCNA federation is quite small, no Classical meetings are held, and Synod is held once a year instead. This is usually done in the month of June, in Ontario, seeing that most of the churches are located there.

At each of the general Synods we were warmly welcomed and given a special place on the floor reserved for delegates. We were also given the opportunity each time to address Synod.

Br. F. Westrik and Rev. W. B. Slomp attended the FRCNA Synod held in June, 2001 at which time they passed on the expression of appreciation for the extension of "limited contact"(see appendix 1).

Rev. R. Aasman and Rev. W.B. Slomp attended the Synod of June, 2002. In their External Relations Committee report the contact with the CanRC was put in a positive light. However, they do state, "they are not yet ready to consider moving towards federative or organic unity, which is the goal of the Canadian Reformed delegates" (See Appendix 2).

At their Synod of June, 2003, also attended by Rev. R. Aasman and Rev. W.B. Slomp, the External Relations Committee reported to Synod, "we continue to sense a lack of understanding of what an experiential, discriminating ministry should be. This is especially evidenced in the preaching." This gave us some reason for concern, for we thought that we all agreed that this was not an accurate statement, especially considering that we dealt extensively with that aspect in our meetings. We also thought that this statement would be corrected on the floor of Synod. As stated further in our report re FRCNA Synod 2003, "In our meetings nothing concrete was stated as to where exactly we lacked; on the contrary we mutually expressed thankfulness for the similarity in preaching." (see appendix 3 and appendix 6).

The "sub-committee" of the CPEU (Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. W.B. Slomp and br. P. Van Woudenberg) also met three times with the sub-committee of the External Relations committee of the FRCNA. Each time we met in the Abbotsford FRCNA building.

On March 14, 2002 we dealt with a paper written by Rev. Pieter VanderMeyden titled "Hendrik DeCock's View Of the Church." The discussion was fruitful in that certain misconceptions about each other's views on the church could be discussed and clarified. Questions about terminology such as visible/invisible church were dealt with. We pointed out that we do not appreciate distinctions that are not based on Scriptures.

We also dealt with a letter from the Abbotsford FRCNA asking advice concerning an issue with the Chatham CanRC regarding announcements made of those who withdraw themselves from the CanRC and who want to join the FRCNA. Advice to be passed on to the two churches involved was given (see appendix 4).

We met once again on January 15, 2003. It could be thankfully reported that the issue of announcements was resolved to the satisfaction of all parties involved. Chatham has agreed to change its wording re members leaving the congregation, and there is now a much better atmosphere between the consistories.

At this meeting we also dealt with a working paper prepared by the joint committees of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Churches (HNRC), and the FRCNA. This paper makes various statements of agreement concerning Scriptures and confessions. Although the wording does not always reflect the language of the Scriptures and/or confessions, generally speaking there is agreement between the FRCNA and CanRC delegates on the content of the statements. However, the statements are quite general in content and can lead to different interpretations and emphases. Dealing with these statements gave all of us a greater understanding of each other's positions and background (See appendix 5).

To keep the momentum of the talks going we met once again on May 21, 2003. That same evening a public meeting was scheduled to which the members of FRCNA and CanRC in the Fraser Valley were invited. In our committee meeting we first dealt with a progress report to be delivered that evening by Rev. W. Wullshleger. After some minor changes this report was approved. Next the papers for the evening by Rev. Aasman about "justification" and Rev. K. Ganger about "sanctification" were discussed. There were no substantial disagreements about the contents of the speeches, and appreciation was expressed for both speeches.

The FRCNA sub-committee then presented us with their report to the upcoming Synod in June. The CanRC delegates express disappointment about the conclusions drawn regarding our contact together. The FRCNA delegates agreed that their report does not accurately reflect our dealings with each other, nor our differences. They promised to make the corrections on the floor of Synod, to be held the following month.

We also dealt with an article published in a Dutch magazine in response to an editorial by Rev. R. Aasman in the *Clarion*. It was written after interviews with Rev. R. Aasman and Dr. L. Bilkes. However, it misrepresented what was said. But, it was not deemed serious enough to warrant further action (See appendix 6).

Another meeting is scheduled for Nov. 3rd, to be held in the Providence CanRC building at Edmonton. At that time we will deal, D.V., with Bible translations, and with a paper of the CanRC dealing with the OPC re visible/invisible church. If anything substantial comes out of that meeting an addendum to our report will be submitted.

Assessment

The FRCNA have three levels of ecclesiastical fellowship: Limited Contact; Limited Correspondence and Complete Correspondence. None of these levels of contact would lead to federative unity with other Reformed churches. It appears that the FRCNA wants to maintain its distinctives and keep separate from other Reformed federations. One of the distinctives they cherish is "experiential preaching". In our meetings together we have discussed this extensively. Although sometimes their terminology may be slightly different from ours, (this is also partly due to the fact that they still use the archaic language of the KJV) there are no appreciable differences. We have also listened to each other's taped sermons. In our meeting of February 8, 2001 we expressed appreciation for each other's sermons, and both sides verbally stated that those sermons could be held on each other's pulpits. Nevertheless in their report to their last Synod they stated about the CanRC that they "continue to sense a lack of understanding of what an experiential, discriminating ministry should be." They state further, "This is especially evidenced in the preaching." Since this was contrary to the conclusion we had come to together, the brothers promised that this statement would be corrected on the floor of Synod. Alas this was not done.

From this it is clear that they still do have concerns about this matter, and no doubt about other matters as well, such as our view of the covenant, and how we address the unregenerate in the preaching.

For that reason we believe that we would do well to continue to meet together, and to attempt to deal with their concerns. We have concerns as well. Do they fully appreciate the Lord's demand for unity? To what extent should "distinctives" play a role in keeping us separate? How serious are they about meaningful fellowship with us? In light of their three levels of ecclesiastical contact, the need for federative unity will need to be further explored.

The meetings in the past five years have been fruitful in that we certainly see a desire from their part to please the Lord, and to be faithful to his Word and the confessions. They appreciate the same about us. Although we have been apart for over one hundred years, we still share a common history and heritage.

We were also able to deal with their concern about how announcements of withdrawals are announced in our churches. There is a growing appreciation for one another, and it would be premature to draw any conclusions about what the future might hold regarding closer contact.

As stated, our meetings are almost always in BC. Since Rev. R. Aasman and Rev. W.B. Slomp both live in Alberta, and since Rev. Aasman's term is about to expire, and since the church at Langley has expressed the desire for closer contact with the FRCNA, we have taken the liberty to speak to Dr. J. Visscher whether he would be willing to serve on the committee. If appointed by Synod, he indicated that he would be willing to serve in that capacity.

Recommendations:

1. To continue meeting with the FRCNA with a view to promoting federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be on this path.
2. To attend each other's Synods and send copies of Acts of Synod to each other.
3. To appoint Dr. J. Visscher to the committee.

Appendix 1

Report on the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches, Dundas, June 7, 2001

On Thursday June 7, 2001 brother F. Westrik and I attended the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches, held in Dundas Ontario. The invitation to attend was received on short notice, and with the wrong information that the sessions would start at 9 AM in the morning and that the prayer service would be held on Wednesday evening at 8 PM.

When we got there on Thursday morning at 8.30 AM, Synod was already in full swing. At that time they were discussing the matter of Bible translations. It was a lively discussion. Currently the decision is on the

books that the King James Version only be used in the church services, and in all church related activities. There is a movement afoot to change that. Younger people are beginning to use more recent translations, and address God as "you" rather than "Thou" and "Thee". It was in good to hear the various arguments put forth by the various brothers, and to observe the brotherly way in which this was done.

During the course of the morning brother Westrik and I were introduced as representatives from the Canadian Reformed Churches and, along with a representative from the URCNA, were invited to be seated behind the moderamen. Before lunch I was given the opportunity to address (which is attached to this report) the assembly. Their report on External Relations was also tabled and dealt with briefly. Only a few questions were asked, one of which was directed to me. I was asked whether or not their extension of "limited contact" had been reciprocated by the Canadian Reformed Churches. I explained to them that we do not have the same rules for contact with other churches, but, as I also mentioned in my address to them, that their extension of "limited contact" had been thankfully received by Synod Neerlandia.

During the afternoon several committee reports were dealt with. The ad hoc committee report dealing with the Internet came with a pastoral letter to the churches concerning the use and abuse of the Internet. I believe that we would do well to also publish that report in the *Clarion*, for it gives excellent information and warnings to the people about the dangers of the Internet.

Brother Westrik and I were well received by the brothers. During lunch and coffee break we were able to interact with various members of the Synod, and to speak to them about some of the differences that currently separate us. I was also able to reacquaint myself with some of my former fellow students who are now ministers in the Free Reformed Churches. It was especially good to meet Rev. Herfst once again who is about to retire from the mission field. He spoke in the afternoon about his work as missionary. He spoke about it passionately, and showed in his address to Synod his love for the Lord, and for the proclamation of God's word amongst the heathens.

From our contact with the various Free Reformed brothers during Synod, it once again became obvious that their view of the church is different than ours. They do not see that it is a sin that true churches exist beside each other in the same location and that it is necessary to merge with another federation. And so, they do not see unity in the same way as we do. Therefore continued dialogue will be necessary, not only in the West, but also in the East.

It was wonderful to see, however, how committed these brothers are to the Reformed faith, and what a love they have for the Lord. I am looking forward to further contact with the Free Reformed Churches in the hope that we will come to a better understanding of each other's decisions, and in the hope that in the end we may truly become one.

For the committee,
Bill Slomp

Appendix 2

Report of the delegates of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity to Synod 2002 of the Free Reformed Churches of North America

By W.B. Slomp

Introduction

The Free Reformed Churches (FRCNA), in their Synod of 2000, extended to the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) "limited contact". This means that we are officially invited to their Synods, and that we also receive their Acts of Synod. Because this federation is relatively small, there are no Classes, instead the FRCNA hold a Synod every year, where every church is represented by two delegates. This year the Synod was held in Vineland, Ont., from June 4-11.

Dr. J. DeJong, who was there on behalf of the committee for the evening prayer service, reports that this service was led by Rev. K. Gangar (Bellevue, WA), who preached on Rev. 2:1-7. He urged the delegates of Synod to work together in love. Rev. Gangar also expressed the hope that the proceedings of this Synod would be characterized by a spirit of love in dealing with all the issues before it. Rev. G. R. Procee (Hamilton, Ont.) was elected as chairman.

The following day, Wednesday June 5, 2002, Rev. R. Aasman and I, having flown in the previous day from Edmonton, also attended. We were there the following day as well, and flew home early Friday morning. We were warmly welcomed and were officially seated as observers. During these two days the various committee reports were tabled and discussed.

External Relations

This committee reported on its various activities during the year. It is the custom in the FRCNA, at the request of a local church, to have the committee approve ministers from outside their federation to preach in their churches. In order to be approved such a minister has to submit himself to a Colloquium Doctum (examination). Two ministers from the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregations (HNRC), and one minister from an independent church in Lethbridge were given permission to preach. Nine others had their preaching privileges renewed for another year. These actions were approved by the Synod.

The FRCNA continues to forge closer ties with the HNRC. They have nearly completed a joint statement on Reformed Doctrines, and are encouraging closer contacts at the consistorial and congregational level.

The committee also reported on its contacts with other federations of churches. Of interest to us is their contact with the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). They had one meeting with them in the past year wherein they discussed "the Appropriation of Salvation". It

appears that they differ somewhat on this point, and thus further discussion is needed.

During the course of Synod Rev. H. Zekfeld, representative from the URCNA, was given the opportunity to address the brothers. He spoke eloquently about their common heritage and of the need for unity. His words were well received.

In the report a positive account was given concerning the contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches. The report does state, however, that they "are not yet ready to consider moving towards federative or organic unity, which is the goal of the Canadian Reformed delegates." The report also states that there are "different emphases in our churches, we on the true Christian, and they on the true church."

Rev. R. Aasman, when he was given the opportunity to address Synod on behalf of the CanRC, addressed some of these issues (see his address in this issue). Dr. L.W. Bilkes (Abbotsford, B.C.) responded warmly, but reiterated that the FRCNA is not ready to pursue federative unity as vigorously as we might like.

Theological Education

The students for ministry are currently being trained in the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. This seminary was established a few years ago by the HNRC. At this point the seminary has two full-time professors, one from the HNRC, and the other, Dr. G.M. Bilkes (son of Dr L.W. Bilkes), from the FRCNA. Also ministers from the respective churches take turns to lecture. The agreement with the HNRC is that the FRCNA will have a teaching input of around 45%.

During the course of Synod dr. G.M. Bilkes was officially appointed as professor. However, since he is not an ordained a minister, he will not be allowed to preach.

Candidate Eric Moerdyk presented himself to Synod with a view to being declared eligible for call. This bother, after having finished his studies in Canada (he also had a year of training at our College) went to The Netherlands to obtain his "*doctorandus*" title from the Theological University of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* in Nederland. He was first examined by the Theological Education Committee before Synod was convened. Having successfully passed that exam, he was also examined on the floor of Synod. This *Colloquium Doctum* took about half an hour, and concentrated on "his personal sense of call and fear of the Lord as well as views on the doctrines of God's Word." To give him time to complete his studies, he will be not be eligible for call until Nov. 1, 2002.

Bible Translation

The Ad-Hoc Bible Translation Committee was given the mandate to investigate and evaluate the NKJV, and to consider updating, in consultation with others, the current KJV. The committee sent letters to "all denominations and Christian leaders in the Anglo-Saxon world that ... might

be willing to support this endeavour." Some negative and some positive responses were received. Other responses are still being awaited. From the discussion on the floor of Synod it became apparent that the NKJV was not to be preferred by some because it uses "you" instead of "Thee and "Thou" as a personal pronoun for God.

The issue concerning Bible translations is quite a contentious one in the FRCNA. Some churches stated that they would no longer wait for Synod to act and that they would go on their own and use the NKJV in the worship services. They expressed the frustration some young people feel in having to use the archaic language of KJV, and cite this as one of the reasons some young people are leaving the church. The chairman urged the delegates to be patient and not act to unilaterally.

Other Reports

Synod dealt with various other committee reports, dealing with Evangelism, Finance, Foreign and Home Missions, Publications, Theological Student Fund, and Youth and Education. It dealt most extensively with Church Visitors Reports and Church Reports. It was good to hear these reports, for it gave us a flavour of what lives in the churches. They are struggling with many of the same issues as we do.

Conclusion

We have no doubt that the FRCNA wants to be faithful to God's Word, as it is summarized in the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity. It was a pleasure to be in their midst and to experience the hand of fellowship. It was evident in many ways that we share a common heritage and thus we felt a close bond with them.

There are notable differences, however. They like to maintain the archaic language of the past in their worship services, as evidenced by their use of the KJV, and old translations of the confessions. They also emphasize experiential preaching, which they claim is different from our preaching. They are of the opinion that we tend towards covenantal automatism in the preaching. These issues have been discussed on the committee level, and will continue to be discussed. On the committee level, however, we have come to the conclusion, after having exchanged sermon tapes, that our preaching is in reality not much different from theirs.

The FRCNA has somewhat of a different view of the church. Whereas they readily will have ministers from other churches on their pulpits, they nevertheless jealously guard their desire to remain a distinct federation of churches. These issues will also continue to be discussed.

It was a privilege for us to represent the CanRC at the Synod of the FRCNA. There is much we can learn from another as we struggle to maintain the truth. May the Lord bless the contact between the CanRC and the FRCNA.

Appendix 3

Report of the delegates of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity to Synod 2003 of the Free Reformed Churches of North America

By R. Aasman and W.B. Slomp

Introduction

On June 10-13, 2003 the Free Reformed Churches (FRCNA), held their annual Synod in Hamilton, Ontario. Rev. R. Aasman and I were both delegated by the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU) to attend.

In the evening, on June the 10th Rev. C. Pronk led the prayer service before the start of Synod. He preached on Hebrews 7: 25. He exhorted the brothers to take a humble attitude before God, and in so doing to reflect on the fact that everything is not perfect in the Free Reformed Churches. He expressed thanks for the intercessory work of the Lord Jesus Christ, without which they as churches could not exist.

After the prayer service coffee and refreshments were served. It was a time for fellowship and an opportunity to renew acquaintances. That same evening Synod met to elect the executive of Classis.

Examinations

The following day the brothers L.J. Bilkes, and D.H. Kranendonk were examined with a view to candidacy. It was a thorough examination, taking most of the day. The brothers took turns preaching on texts assigned to them (John 12:32 and 1 Tim. 1: 15 resp.). They thoroughly dealt with the text, and it was a pleasure listening to them. After a critique of the sermons, they were examined in the area of Homiletics (the art of preaching), Old and New Testament knowledge, Dogmatics and the Church Order. After this, in closed session, they were examined with respect to their spiritual life and internal call to the ministry. By secret ballot both brothers were accepted to the ministry. They then signed the Form of Subscription, and they were handed the formal credentials, authorizing them to minister in the FRCNA.

Bible Translation

Throughout the week of Synod the matter of Bible translation was discussed. This continues to be a contentious issue. The recommendation by the Ad-Hoc Translation Committee to do a low-grade revision of the King James Version (KJV) was questioned by various delegates. Such a "low-grade" translation would consist of cooperating with other conservative churches in modernizing the language of the KJV. Archaic words would be replaced with contemporary ones, and modern spelling and modern

capitalization would be used. Various delegates wanted to know whether or not the revision of language would be done on the basis of the original languages, or on the basis of the King James text itself. Furthermore, the criticism was given that they would be one of the only churches using such a translation, and that they would in this way isolate themselves from the Christian community. Although the committee criticized the translation of the New King James Version (NKJV), various delegates stated that that would be their translation of choice. In the end the decision was made to urge the Committee to continue with its studies, and in the meantime to allow freedom to the consistories to use the NKJV in all church activities, whereas in broader assemblies the KJV will continue to be used.

External relations

The External Relations tabled its report, which required little discussion. There were various delegates from other churches present. Rev. B. de Graaf was there to represent the sister churches in The Netherlands. He noted that in The Netherlands there was a great influence from the world on the church, and that that brings with it many challenges.

On behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches Rev. W.B. Slomp was also given the opportunity to speak. He gave them an overview of the workings and structure of the Canadian Reformed Churches. He passed on greetings from the CanRC and told them that Rev. Aasman and he were both impressed with the thoroughness of the examinations of the candidates, and of the FRCNA's obvious love for the truth of the Scriptures, and the confessions. We share the same faith and for that reason we as federations of churches ought not to exist apart.

Rev. John Bouwers of the URC, Rev. W. Scott of the Free Church of Scotland (continuing), Rev. M. Kelderman of the Heritage Reformed Congregations, and Rev. M. Luimes of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches also spoke on behalf of their churches.

Conclusion

We as delegates appreciate the contact we have had with the FRCNA in the last few years. We are close in many ways. However there remains a barrier that is difficult to break down. The FRCNA appears intent on maintaining its "distinctives", and they become somewhat nervous when there is any talk of unity with us. For example, even though in committee we dealt extensively with experiential preaching, the charge continues to be made that we do not understand what a correct ministry in that regard is all about. This, to our surprise, was even stated to Synod in the report of the external relations committee when they reported, "...we continue to sense a lack of understanding of what an experiential, discriminating ministry should be. This is especially evidenced in the preaching." In our meetings nothing concrete was stated as to where exactly we lacked; on the contrary we mutually expressed thankfulness for the similarity in preaching.

Let us hope and pray that in spite of this our contact will bear fruit. As it is we now have what they call "limited contact" with them. This is an official declaration on their part that we attend each other's Synods, that we exchange copies of the *Acts of Synod*, and that we offer spiritual support to one another. Let us continue to do so.

Appendix 4

Report of meeting between the sub-committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches and of the Free Reformed Churches. The meeting was held on Thursday, March 14, 2002, from 10:00 a.m. till 3:15 p.m. in the Abbotsford Free Reformed Church.

Present were the Revs. Bill Slomp and Richard Aasman with br. Peter VanWoudenberg from the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), and the Revs. Lawrence Bilkes, Kuldip Gangar, Hans Overduin and Wim Wullschlegler from the Free Reformed Churches (FRCNA).

1. The meeting was presided by Rev. W.B. Slomp, who led us in opening devotions. We sang together Psalter 238, after which chairman read I Peter 1:13-25, and spoke a few edifying words. He then led us in prayer.

2. Our first point was to set an agenda for the day. It was decided to discuss the following topics: 1. Synod reports concerning our contacts as churches, 2. A paper written by Rev. Pieter VanderMeyden titled "Hendrik DeCock's View Of the Church," 3. A letter from the Chatham consistory, 4. A topic for our next meeting. [During lunchtime, from noon until 1:30 p.m., we had assented to having a meeting with the board of Eirana Support Services to give our input on the future of this organization.

3. The CanRC have basically accepted our offer for limited contact at their Synod 2001 in Neerlandia. Rev. Aasman pointed out that we should understand that we are working toward organic unity, should everything be blessed. The FRCNA Synod (Acts of Synod, 2001, page 19 and 40) decided to instruct the committee to continue discussions with the CanRC. Since each church is having contacts with other churches, the desire is expressed to let each other know what our third-party contacts are.

4. Opportunity was given to each member to give a personal impression of the paper written by Rev. VanderMeyden on 'Hendrick DeCock's View of the Church.' Overall appreciation was expressed for this fine piece of work. A summary of comments that were made: Rev. Aasman asked for some clarification of DeCock's statement, "*Neither do I ever present the same duty to all, but to some I declare that they ought to examine themselves and as they have received the Lord Jesus Christ, that they also walk in Him; while to others I declare and preach that, unless they repent and turn to the Lord from their dead works, they will be forever lost, and that their condemnation*

will be worse than that of Tyre and Sidon” (p.27). Reponse: DeCock means the same as what the Heidelberg Catechism says in Lord's Day 31 about the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, esp. in Q/A 84 on the preaching of the Gospel. Rev. Overduin asked if the CanRC emphasize more the marks of the true church, whereas the FRCNA emphasize more the marks of the true Christian. Reponse: the CanRC also warn against complacency and dead orthodoxy. Rev. Wuilschleger asked how the CanRC value the distinction made between visible and invisible church. The CanRC do not appreciate distinctions that are not based on Scripture. Rev. Gangar asked if the CanRC make a distinction between repentance the first time and repentance by renewal. Should an applicant for confession of faith be turned down, if he cannot speak of conviction of sin? And if someone has grown up in the church and never done anything bad, how would we respond to that? Response: some do fear the Lord from their youth, and cannot speak of a conscious turning point in their life. It was also noted that the CanRC warn all the time against covenantal automatism. Rev. Bilkes pointed out that the Belgic Confession speaks in a different way about regeneration than the Canons of Dort do. The Belgic understands it as a life long process, whereas the Canons of Dort emphasize it as the beginning of spiritual life. Rev. Bilkes further could not escape the conclusion that in 1834 the CanRC and the FRCNA were in one church.

5. A letter was on the table from the Chatham FRCNA, asking the External Relations Committee for advice on an issue with the Chatham CanRC. The letter is passed on to our sub-committee. The issue relates to the announcement made in the Chatham CanRC re members that leave their congregation for another church. The persons are announced as having withdrawn themselves *‘from the supervision and discipline of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ here at this place.’* In a further explanation this consistory explains his announcement as follows: “If we have no sister-church relation with the community to which the member is going, our only conclusion can be this: that this member has broken with the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This issue re church membership has clouded the discussions between both consistories to such an extent that the FRCNA consistory considers terminating further discussions. The CanRC brothers do not like this statement because it is open to misunderstanding. It would be better to state: *‘withdrawn from the supervision and discipline of the Ebenezer CanRC.’* At the same time the brothers do recommend the FRCNA consistory of Chatham to continue their talks. The FRCNA has to *‘educate’* the CanRC. The CanRC are also struggling with these issues.

6. Our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 26. The evening prior to this meeting we are planning to have a public meeting again. This public meeting will be organized by the Abbotsford FRCNA. Speakers are the Revs. Aasman and Gangar. Since we could not settle on a topic or message, we asked the brothers to discuss this between them two. As to the sub-committee meeting on September 26, Rev. Bilkes will prepare a paper

stating the points we have in common with the CanRC (similar to what the HNRC-FRCNA sub-committee has prepared), as a starting point for our discussion.

7. As a miscellaneous item, the CanRC brothers from Alberta asked if the FRCNA can share the costs of their traveling next time. Up to now the CanRC have paid for their traveling expenses. The FRCNA are asked to pay the airfare next time, which would amount to about \$400. This is agreed.

8. Rev. Wullschleger closed the meeting with thanksgiving and prayer.

Prepared and submitted by Rev. J. W. Wullschleger

Appendix 5

Minutes of meeting CanRC and FRCNA delegates in Abbotsford FRCNA on Wednesday, January 15, 2003 from 10:45 a.m. till 4:15 p.m.

Present are the Revs. Richard Aasman, Lawrence Bilkes, Kuldip Gangar, Hans Overduin, Bill Slomp, Wim Wullschleger, and elder Pieter VanWoudenberg.

1. Opening.

Rev. Gangar presides the meeting. He opens the meeting with Scripture reading Mark 5:1-20, the healing of the demon-possessed man, and leads us in opening prayer. He meditates on this passage, esp. the verses 17 and 18. In these verses two prayers are done. The one is for Jesus' departure, the other by the ex-demon-possessed man to follow Jesus on His journeys. Since Jesus was no longer welcome in Gadara, he might have felt also unwelcome in his own country. Jesus, however, does not allow him to follow Him. He must tell his fellow-citizens what great works the Lord has done to him. As sub-committees we are also doing things that do not lie in the line of expectation or our own choice. But the Lord calls us also to speak together as churches of Reformed persuasion.

2. Agenda.

The agenda is set for this meeting: 1. Update on Chatham FRCNA – CanRC; 2. HNRC-FRCNA discussion paper. The latter will be the bulk of the meeting. We will also discuss the merit of having our discussions.

3. Chatham.

Rev. R. Aasman reports that there is a much better atmosphere between the consistories. The Chatham CanRC has changed its wording re members leaving the congregation.

4. HNRC-FRCNA discussion paper.

We go over all the paragraphs. Some do not need discussion, because the brothers agree upon them. Others are discussed extensively. The CanRC

do object to the wording of some paragraphs, and would like that to be more in line with Scripture, confession and our liturgical forms. Yet, they do agree with all that is said as to its contents and meaning. They understand the different background of the HNRC, and the terminology used in their churches, with which they are quite unfamiliar. The FRCNA discussed and adopted this paper on ERC level. They also come up with some improvements. With some changes this paper can be adopted as an agreement between our both sub-committees. Footnote: this paper does not have extra-creedal status, but has functioned as a discussion paper.

The following items are discussed:

- **(1e. SCRIPTURES)** The CanRC produced an extensive report on Bible Translation, dealing with textual issues. Translations that are recommended in their churches are the NIV, NKJV (including the KJV), and the NASB.
- **(2a. CONFESSIONS)** One of the FRCNA brothers remarks that it is a strength of the CanRC that they are confessionally minded. A discussion follows on available publications in the area of our Reformed creeds, both in the Dutch and English language.
- **(2b.)** While it is agreed that the Westminster Standards concur with the Three Forms of Unity, some of the differences are pointed out. The main differences concern the view on the Covenant (two versus three covenant view), assurance of faith, the Sabbath, and the relationship between visible and invisible church
- **(3a. CREATION)** The CanRC brothers make some objection to the wording '24 hour' days. The meaning, however, is clear and agreed upon. God created heaven and earth in six regular days, not in periods of thousands or maybe millions of years. The matter of creation is not an issue in either churches.
- **(4c. COVENANT OF GRACE)** It is understood that this fights against the doctrine of presumptive regeneration. A question arises on children that die in their infancy. This point does not intend to take away from what the Canons of Dort confess in I, 17.
- **(4d.)** The CanRC do have difficulty with the formulation "There are two kinds of Covenant children." They agree with the intent: You can be in the covenant in two ways, in a non-saving way and in a saving way. Suggested formulation would be something like, "We believe that all Covenant children are sanctified in Christ, but they must be nurtured in the Christian faith and godliness, that they may come to faith in Christ and grow in faith." [*Can the CanRC confirm their position? JWW*]
- **(4f.)** There is some unclarity on the term "administration." Is it to be understood as the economy or dispensation of the covenant in both Old and New Testament? Or does it relate to the preaching of the Gospel and the offer of grace?
- **(4g.)** One of the FRCNA brothers wonders if not after 'hypocrites' should be a colon. The presumptuous, self-righteous, etc. are a further specification of 'hypocrites'.

- **(5a. PROFESSION OF FAITH)** The CanRC brothers question what is the point of saying: Profession of faith should be of a true faith. The FRCNA brothers explain the point. It is directed against "Confession of the truth." This view is predominant in the NRC, where someone can make confession of faith without professing at the same time personal faith in Christ. It would be better to replace 'true' faith by 'living' faith. 'True faith' can still be interpreted objectively.
- **(5b.)** Addresses the Labadist view of a pure congregation of only regenerate persons.
- **(5d.)** The relationship between profession of faith and the Lord's Supper should be expressed stronger. It would be more in line with our Reformed fathers to say, "Making confession of faith is asking access to the Lord's Table." It is agreed that the relationship between both is not an automatic one.
- **(6b. PREACHING)** It would be more confessional to speak about "the *knowledge* of guilt, grace and gratitude" instead of "the *experience*" of them. It is agreed that 'knowledge' in a biblical sense includes 'experience.' Head knowledge and heart knowledge are two aspects of saving knowledge. Rev. Bilkes: "You can only properly appreciate the Second Reformation if you appreciate the First Reformation. You can only properly appreciate the 'experience' part if you appreciate 'knowledge'." It is also noted that it would be good to make explicit reference to our Doctrinal Standards.
- **(6c.)** Reference could be made to the Canons of Dort, III/IV, 8.
- **(7d. REGENERATION)** Reference could be made to the canons of Dort, III/IV, 12, "Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence, becomes itself active. Wherefore also, man is himself rightly said to believe and repent, by virtue of that grace received." The CanRC ask for sources on the subject of regeneration. Recommended: S. Ferguson, *The Christian Life*"; Th. Watson, "Repentance"; J.C. Ryle, "Holiness," and some others.
- **(8b. JUSTIFICATION)** Suggested change: "the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the *believers*."
- **(8c.)** A further discussion develops on the words "one time" in: "Justification is a *one time* act of God declaring the sinner righteous, etc." According to the CanRC, justification is a daily process. We are justified once and daily, as often as we confess our sins. The FRCNA fear that such a view would take away from the justification we receive once we believe. Scripture does not speak about this as a repeated act. The CanRC refer to the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 51, Q/A 126, "be pleased for the sake of Christ's blood, not to *impute* to us poor sinners our transgressions..." This is a daily prayer for forgiveness. It is agreed that we will discuss this point further at a later date.*

- **(9c. CHRIST'S ATONEMENT)** The term 'general grace' – just as 'common grace' – is not biblical language. Scripture speaks about grace only in one way. It would be better to speak here of the benevolence of God, or his kindness or goodness. 'Grace' in Scripture is redeeming grace, and leads to salvation.
- **(12b. WORSHIP)** It is too strongly expressed that Scripture 'mandates' the singing of only the Psalms in the worship services.
- **(14. REVIVALS)** This is a good point. Is the term 'Revival' a technical term or a loose term? Reference is made to Ian Murray's book *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858*.
- **(16. UNITY)** At this point the discussion centers on where we are going. Different opinions are expressed: "Would it not be enough to 'express' unity, rather than seeking to be under one roof?" "We got to do the one, but not to neglect the other." "Let us set out parameters how we can function as churches, maybe not as one federation." "If you are not ready to have unity, take time."

5. Next meeting.

We set the date for the next meeting: May 21. We meet at 11:00 a.m. A public meeting is scheduled for the evening in the Abbotsford FRCNA [?]. Rev. Wullschleger will give a progress report. The Revs. Aasman and Gangar will speak on respectively Justification and Sanctification. The time allotted for each speech is 25 minutes. The meeting should last about one hour and a half.

6. Closing

Rev. Aasman closes the meeting with thanksgiving and prayer.

The meeting is adjourned around 4:15 p.m.

Prepared by pastor Wim Wullschleger

Appendix 6

Minutes of meeting CanRC and FRCNA delegates in Abbotsford FRCNA, May 21, 2003

Present are the Revs. Richard Aasman, Lawrence Bilkes, Kuldip Gangar, Hans Overduin, Bill Slomp, Wim Wullschleger, and elder Pieter VanWoudenberg.

1. Opening.

Rev. Wullschleger chairs the meeting. He opens the meeting with the reading of 1 Cor. 15: 50-58, and leads in opening prayer. Rev. Slomp is appointed to write the minutes.

2. Agenda.

The agenda is set for this meeting as follows:

- a. Discussion of progress report to be presented for the public meeting later that evening.
- b. Discussion of speeches and format for the public meeting later that evening;
- c. Reports to upcoming respective Synods;
- d. Article in *Nederlands Dagblad*;
- e. Next meeting: Date, Place and Topic.

3. **Discussion of progress report.** Rev. Wullschleger reads his progress report to be presented later that evening at the public meeting. After some minor changes this report is approved. At this point br. VanWoudenberg leaves the meeting to attend the funeral of Randy DeLeeuw.

4. **Discussion of speeches and format for the public meeting** later that evening. The Revs. Aasman and Ganger give an overview of their papers on justification and sanctification respectively to be presented at the public meeting. Some questions are tabled and clarifications are made. There are no substantial disagreements about the contents of the speeches. It is agreed that each presentation should take no longer than 25 minutes each. Rev. Bilkes, who will preside over the meeting, will ensure that that time frame will be adhered to.

5. Reports to upcoming respective Synods.

- a. After having attended the FRCNA Synod in June, the sub-committee of the Unity Committee will formulate its report for their upcoming General Synod in February 2004 and a copy of that report will be sent to the sub-committee of the External Relations Committee of the FRCNA.
- b. The FRCNA sub-committee then presents the report of their report to their Synod in June 2003. It is agreed that that report does not accurately reflect our dealings with each other, nor does it accurately reflect our differences. Since it is too late to change the report, the brothers of the FRCNA committee promise to correct this on the floor of their upcoming FRCNA Synod in June 2003.

6. **Article in *Nederlands Dagblad*.** A few months ago an article was published in *Nederlands Dagblad* in response to an editorial Rev. Aasman in the *Clarion*. *Nederlands Dagblad* interviewed both Rev. Aasman and Rev. Bilkes. In the article conflicting views between Rev. Aasman and Rev. Bilkes were reported concerning the differences between the East and the West. However, the article did not accurately reflect what was said to the reporter. Furthermore the

reporter of *Nederlands Dagblad* had promised to contact Rev. Bilkes before it was published. This was not done. Regret is expressed that this took place. It was not deemed necessary to take further action.

7. **Next meeting: Date, Place and Topic.** The next meeting will be held, D.V., in Edmonton, Alberta on Monday, November 3, 2003 starting at 11.00 a.m. in the Providence Canadian Reformed Church building. Rev. Overduin will chair this meeting. In the morning Bible translations will be dealt with. Rev. Slomp will make a presentation, with Rev. Gangar responding. In the afternoon an article to a General Synod Canadian Reformed in their dealings with the OPC re visible/invisible church will be dealt with. This article will be e-mailed to all the brothers by Rev. Aasman. Rev. Wullschleger will respond.
8. **Closing.** Rev. Gangar closes the meeting with thanksgiving and prayer.

Prepared by Bill Slomp May 28, 2003

* * *

Report of the Committee re: Church Order to the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity.

A. Mandate

The committee appointed by Synod Neerlandia 2001 received the following mandate [Acts General Synod Neerlandia 2001 Article 95 p. 107]:

- 1.3.1. To work closely with the committee re: church order appointed by the URCNA synod;
- 1.3.2. To evaluate the differences between the current church orders of the federations in the light of the Scriptural and Confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Church Order of Dort;
- 1.3.3. To propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort;
- 1.3.4. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
- 1.3.5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion."

B. The Committee and its activities

The Committee, composed of Dr. Jack De Jong (convener), br. Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. John VanWoudenberg and Dr. Art. Witten, met for

a total of nine times as a committee. It also met three times with the committee re: church order of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), twice in Grand Rapids, MI and once in Burlington, ON. A fourth combined meeting has been scheduled D.V for November 4-6, 2003.

The URCNA committee is composed of Dr. Nelson Kloosterman, Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema and br. Harry Van Gorp.

The committee enjoyed an excellent working relationship both internally as well as with the brothers of the URCNA. Unfortunately, during the course of time the health of Dr. De Jong deteriorated to the point where he could no longer function effectively as an active member of the Committee. While he still attended all meetings, Br. Nordeman took over as convener for the remainder of the term, and the Committee asked Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen to assist the Committee as an advisor and interim member in order for the work to continue. At the close of the last combined meeting Dr. De Jong informed the meeting that because of the above mentioned reasons he had to be relieved of the responsibilities of being a member of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity and the Committee re: Church Order. This he subsequently confirmed in writing. The Committee acknowledged this request with sadness and profound regret, and reflected on Dr. De Jong's love for his work, his wholehearted commitment to the union process and his desire to see this work come to fruition. Also Dr. Kloosterman responded on behalf of the URCNA brothers expressing both appreciation for Dr. De Jong's contribution to the work of the committees and the hope that he would indeed be able to enjoy the final product of our labours. He read from Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders, Acts 20, and led in prayer, placing the needs of our brother and his family before the Lord, and asking that He graciously surround the De Jong family with His love and grace.

Mandate 1.3.1.

The Committee worked closely with the committee re: church order appointed by the Synod Escondido 2001 of the URCNA. The combined committees met three times for a total of seven days including some evenings. It became clear that the respective mandates were very similar in that the differences between the current church orders of the federations are to be evaluated in the light of the scriptural and confessional principles, and to propose a common church order maintaining the principles, structure and essential provisions of the Church Order of Dort. It was agreed to work as one committee to develop a draft for a common church order with a single set of minutes and press releases. At the combined meetings Dr. Kloosterman functioned as chairman, Rev. Sikkema as recorder of the minutes and br. Nordeman prepared the press releases. Each meeting could be concluded with thanks and praise to our heavenly Father for the brotherly manner in which the committee could proceed with its work.

Mandate 1.3.2

In order to evaluate the differences between the current church orders of the two federations the Committee, at its earlier meetings, spent considerable time mapping these church orders as well as the Church Order of Dort (Dort) as accepted in 1914 by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in its English version. A comparison was made for numbering and arrangement of both the CanRC and URCNA church orders against Dort (1914) and from there to Dort 1618-1619. Articles where the CanRC and the URCNA had changed from these earlier church orders were carefully noted for later discussion as per our mandate to do so in light of the scriptural and confessional principles. A draft proposal for a new church order was prepared prior to the first combined meeting of the two committees. To clarify terminology used, when we speak of the Church Order of Dort we refer to the original Church Order of 1618 and the version adopted by the CRC in 1914.

Mandate 1.3.3.

To accomplish the task of proposing a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort, the combined committees at its first meeting reviewed the preparatory work done by each committee. In addition to the proposal prepared by the CanRC committee the URCNA committee placed a revision of the 1997 URCNA church order on the table. It was agreed to use Dort as a starting point for a proposed new church order and to compare it to the proposals from both sub-committees. The respective mandates used words that this be a "common church order maintaining the principles, structure and essential provisions of the Church Order of Dort". This, however, was not interpreted to mean a slavish following of each article, its wording and sequence in the church order. At the beginning of each meeting the articles provisionally adopted at previous meetings were carefully reviewed and refined where necessary.

The first item in this effort was a discussion on the need for, and place of an introduction in a church order. The CanRC introduction, as recommended by General Synod Lincoln 1992, provides an overview of the history of this church order. In the URCNA church order the introduction focuses more on a declaration of beliefs and the biblical basis for a church order. The URCNA church order also includes a section 'Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government'. The URCNA committee considers these foundational principles to be fundamental. While specific wording could be revised or improved on, the principles as based on Holy Scriptures must remain. After an extensive discussion the meeting reached a consensus on the exact wording of the four components of this introduction: 1) Biblical and Confessional Basis, 2) Historical Background, 3) Foundational Principles and 4) Broad Divisions. This has been attached to this report as Appendix A.

Agreement was reached on wording of Art. 1 'The purpose of the church order' and Art. 2 'The three offices'. At this point it was decided to

deal with subsequent articles without numbering them. Their proper sequence within the church order will be determined later.

Agreement was reached on part of the articles dealing with the duties and the lawful calling of the ministers of the Word. Also provisional agreement was reached on articles dealing with ministers being bound to a particular church, ministers without a congregation coming from another federation and articles dealing with provisions for the care of the minister and the retirement of the minister. The Dort provision for 'recent converts wishing to enter the ministry' is adequately covered in the proposed article headed "An Ordained Minister Without a Congregation Entering the Federation", where a requirement of an examination by classis and "an adequate period of consistorial supervision" is stipulated.

The committee took some time to review the need for an article dealing with admitting men to the ministry who have not pursued the regular course of study (old Dort article 8). This article could be helpful in times of calamity or distress. However, with a view to past abuse of this article in some Reformed churches, and the potential for abuse of such an article in the future of the united churches, as well as the churches' requirement that every minister be thoroughly trained for the ministry, a training that at present is readily available, it was agreed by both committees that the churches will be better served by omitting such an article.

Much time was spent discussing the principle of 'jurisdiction'. This is an area where both federations have distinct views coloured by tradition as well as recent experiences. The authority of the elders and minister is unquestionably one given to the church by the Lord. But what authority do broader assemblies have in the churches? It was decided to adopt a simple statement as follows: "The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them."

At some length we debated the question whose responsibility it is to declare a man a candidate for the ministry. The consideration that the function of a minister extends beyond the local congregation and that he is available for call among all the churches of the federation suggests that declaring a man eligible for call is not the task of a consistory but more appropriately that of a classis. We also discussed the necessity for, and procedure of consistorial involvement in the preparation and nurturing of a man for the ministry.

It was agreed that, when a vacant church wishes to call a minister for the second time during the same vacancy, classical approval is required.

An extended discussion took place on the division and alignment of churches, classes and synods. The role of regional synod and the role of the regional synodical deputies also received attention. Information was exchanged and a better understanding gained by this discussion.

A consensus was reached that among the churches of the federation, four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod. The terms "classis" and "synod"

designate either ecclesiastical assemblies or ecclesiastical regions. As assemblies, classes and synods exist only for the duration of their meetings. These assemblies are deliberative in nature.

Appropriate articles were formulated prescribing that those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be issued proper credentials by their delegating body, thereby receiving authorization to deal with all the matters properly placed before them; and that in all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, and only in an ecclesiastical manner. The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them. All matters must originate with a consistory and must first be considered by a classis and a regional synod before they may be considered by a general synod. Only those matters shall be considered in the broader assemblies that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches in common. Each broader assembly shall approve for publication a press release regarding its proceedings.

Regarding delegation to broader assemblies a consensus was reached that classis shall choose the delegates to both the regional synod and the general synod proportional to the number of classes participating. This would ensure a better distribution of delegates from among the churches. The exact formula still needs to be determined.

Agreements were also reached on the proposed wording of articles relating to the specific function and make-up of a classis and that a classis shall be held every four months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighbouring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches that would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

Decisions regarding 'church visitors' include the understanding that classis shall appoint a number of its most experienced and competent ministers and elders to visit all the churches of the classis, and that at each church visit at least one of the visitors shall be a minister. A description of the specific task and function of the church visitors was agreed upon.

Agreements were also reached on the matters pertaining to archives, counsellors, regional synod and deputies of regional synod. A regional synod, consisting of three or more classes in a region, shall ordinarily meet once per year. This synod shall deal only with such matters as are placed on its agenda by the member classes, and with appeals from consistories or church members who have previously processed their appeals through their consistory and classis.

Mandate 1.3.4.

The CPEU and the churches were kept informed and updated on the progress of the Committee via the press releases that were published in Clarion, Reformed Polemics and Christian Renewal. These press releases are included in this report as Appendix B.

C. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is with much thankfulness to the Lord that the Committee could fulfill its mandate to this point. Much appreciation is felt for the spirit and the brotherly harmony wherein our work is progressing and the growing understanding of each other. It is our prayer that also the work of the Committee may contribute to a greater awareness and understanding between the respective churches.

We recommend that Synod Chatham 2004:

1. Recognize Dr. J. De Jong for the outstanding contribution he made to the work of the Committee for a common church order and accept his request to be relieved of his appointment.
2. Receive this report and its appendices as a progress report and that the details of our proposed common church order not be opened for discussion or debate at this time, but that all concerns from the churches be sent in writing to the Committee for its consideration.
3. Re-appoint the committee members, and for the sake of continuity appoint Dr. G. Nederveen as the fourth member to allow the Committee to complete its mandate.
4. Charge the Committee to complete its task as mandated.

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In order to perform the task given to us by Synod Neerlandia 2001 the Committee incurred a total of \$3,692.37 in expenses.

Respectfully submitted,

J. De Jong
G.J. Nordeman
A. Witten
J. VanWoudenberg

For the Committee
Gerard J. Nordeman, Clerk and Interim Convener

Appendix A

Introduction

Biblical and Confessional Basis

We Reformed believers maintain that the standard for personal, public, and ecclesiastical life is God's Word, the inspired, infallible, and inerrant book of Holy Scripture. As a federation of churches we declare our complete subjection and obedience to that Word of God. We also declare that we are confessional churches, in that we believe and are fully persuaded that the Three Forms of Unity, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, summarize and do fully agree with the Word of God. Therefore, we unitedly subscribe to these Reformed Confessions.

Both the Word of God and these Reformed Confessions demand that in our ecclesiastical structure and rule we openly acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the supreme and only Head of the church. Christ exercises His headship in the churches by His Word and Spirit through the ordained offices, for the sake of purity of doctrine, holiness of life, and order in the churches. The churches of our federation, although distinct, willingly display their unity and accountability, both to each other and especially to Christ, by means of our common Confessions and this Church Order. Congregations manifest this unity when their delegates meet together in the broader assemblies.

Historical Background

Our Church Order has its roots in the continental European background of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformed churches desired to be faithful to God's Word in practice and life as well as in doctrine. Therefore, as early as the mid-sixteenth century, and even in the midst of persecution, the Reformed churches set down the foundation of the Church Order at various synods beginning in 1563, including those in Wezel, the Netherlands (1568), and in Emden, Germany (1571). For the most part, the decisions of the assemblies in this period leaned heavily on the church orders already in place and used by the Reformed churches in France and Geneva.

The Church Order adopted at Emden was revised at the Synods of Dordrecht (1574 and 1578), Middelburg (1581), and the Hague (1586), before being adopted by the well-known Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619). Our Church Order follows the principles and structure of the Church Order of Dordrecht.

Foundational Principles

The following list of foundational principles, though not exhaustive, provides a clear Biblical foundation for, and source of our Church Order.

1. The church is the possession of Christ, who is the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27

2. As Mediator of the New Covenant, Christ is the Head of the church.
Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18
3. Because the church is Christ's possession and He is its Head, the principles governing the church are determined not by human preference, but by biblical teaching.
Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:18, II Timothy 3:16, 17
4. The catholic or universal church possesses a spiritual unity in Christ and in the Holy Scriptures.
Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20; I Timothy 3:15; II John 9
5. The Lord gave no permanent universal, national or regional offices to His church. The offices of minister, elder and deacon are local in authority and function. Therefore, a broader assembly governs the church only by way of delegation, and exists only when it is in session.
Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Ephesians 4:11-16; Titus 1:5
6. In its subjection to its Heavenly Head, the church is governed by Christ from heaven by means of His Word and Spirit with the keys of the kingdom, which He has given to the local church for that purpose. Therefore, no church may lord it over another church, nor may one office bearer lord it over another office bearer.
Matthew 16:19; 23:8; John 20:22, 23; Acts 20:28-32; Titus 1:5
7. Although churches exist in certain circumstances without formal federative relationships, the well-being of the church requires that such relationships be entered wherever possible. Entering into or remaining in such relationships should be voluntary; there is however a spiritual obligation to seek and maintain the federative unity of the churches by formal bonds of fellowship and cooperation.
Acts 11:22, 27-30; 15:22-35; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16: 1-3; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 4: 9-10; Revelation 1:11, 20
8. The exercise of a federative relationship is possible only on the basis of unity in faith and in confession.
I Corinthians 10:14-22; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:16-17
9. Member churches meet together in broader assemblies to manifest ecclesiastical unity, to guard against human imperfections and to benefit from the wisdom of many counselors. The decisions of such assemblies derive their authority from their conformity to the Word of God.
Proverbs 11:14; Acts 15:1-35; I Corinthians 13:9-10; II Timothy 3:16-17

10. In order to manifest our spiritual unity, churches should seek contact with other faithful, confessionally Reformed churches for their mutual edification and as an effective witness to the world.
John 17:21-23; Ephesians 4:1-6
11. The church is mandated to exercise its ministry of reconciliation by proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth.
Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 5:18-21
12. Christ cares for and governs His church through the office bearers, whom He chooses through the congregation.
Acts 1:23-26; 6:2-3; 14:23; I Timothy 3:1,8; 5:17
13. The Scriptures require that ministers, elders and deacons be thoroughly equipped for the suitable discharge of their respective offices.
I Timothy 3:2-9; 4:16; II Timothy 2:14-16; 3:14; 4:1-5
14. Being the chosen and redeemed people of God, the church, under the supervision of the Consistory, is called to worship Him according to the Scriptural principles governing worship.
Leviticus 10:1-3; Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Psalm 95:1,2,6; Psalm 100:4; John 4:24; I Peter 2:9
15. Since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, it is called through its teaching ministry to build up the people of God in faith.
Deuteronomy 11:19; Ephesians 4:11-16; I Timothy 4:6; II Timothy 2:2; 3:16-17
16. Christian discipline, arising from God's love for His people, is exercised in the church to correct and strengthen the people of God, to maintain the unity and the purity of the church of Christ, and thereby to bring honor and glory to God's name.
I Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:13; Hebrews 12:7-11
17. The exercise of Christian discipline is first of all a personal duty of every church member, but when official discipline by the church becomes necessary, it must be exercised by the Consistory of the church, to whom the keys of the kingdom are entrusted.
Matthew 18:15-20; John 20:22-23; Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 5:13; I Peter 5:1-3

Broad Divisions

Since we desire to honor the apostolic command that in the churches all things are to be done decently and in good order (I Corinthians 14:40), we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities under the following divisions:

- I. Offices (Articles 1-)
- II. Assemblies (Articles -)
- III. Worship, Sacraments and Ceremonies (Articles -)
- IV. Discipline (Articles -)

Appendix B

Press Release of the
meeting of the combined committees of the
Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches
to propose a common church order
held December 11-12, 2002
at the United Reformed Church of Dutton, MI

Present were: Dr. Nelson Kloosterman, Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond Sikkema and Mr. Harry Van Gurp, representing the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), and Dr. Jack DeJong, Mr. Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. John VanWoudenberg and Dr. Art Witten of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC).

Dr. Kloosterman opened the meeting with a brief meditation on Luke 1: 39 - 46 and prayer.

Motions to appoint Dr. Kloosterman as chairman and Rev. Sikkema as recorder of the minutes of this meeting were adopted. Mr. Nordeman was appointed to prepare the press release.

An agenda and timetable were adopted. The agenda included a presentation of a summary of the labors of the URC committee, a presentation of a summary of the labors of the CanRC committee, discussion and adoption of a *modus operandi* and its implementation, and the adoption of minutes and press release. It was decided to make the most use of available time by meeting in the evening as well.

Dr. Kloosterman shared with the meeting the mandate that the committee had received from the Fourth Synod of the URCNA, Escondido 2001:

- a) That the current Church Orders of the two federations be evaluated in the light of the Scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Dort CO.
- b) That the CO committee work together with a Canadian Reformed CO committee to develop suitable and agreeable adaptation[s] of the Church Order of Dort, retaining and maintaining its principles, structure and essential provisions.

He then explained how the committee had worked with this mandate and the resulting proposals for a church order, having taken into consideration the Scriptures-based foundational principles for Reformed church government.

Dr. DeJong in a similar fashion gave an overview of the activities of the CanRC committee and the mandate this committee had received from Synod Neerlandia 2001:

1. To work closely with the committee re church order appointed by the URCNA synod.
2. To evaluate the differences between the current church orders of the federations in the light of the Scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Church Order of Dort.
3. To propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort

4. To keep the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity updated on the progress.
5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

It became clear that the respective mandates are very similar in that the differences between the current church orders of the federations are to be evaluated in the light of the Scriptural and confessional principles, and to propose a common church order maintaining the principles, structure and essential provisions of the Church Order of Dort. Both committees had done extensive work in mapping the various church orders, including the Church Order of Dort, to facilitate this evaluation. To clarify terminology used, it is understood that when speaking of the Church Order of Dort we refer to the original Church Order of 1618 and the adopted version by the CRC in 1914 in its English translation (1920).

It was agreed to work as one committee to develop a draft for a common church order with a single set of minutes and press releases. However, the meeting also recognized that in this process the occasional need for one of the sub-committees to confer privately might arise.

While both committees had prepared a draft proposal for a common church order, the meeting adopted a motion to use the Church Order as adopted by the CRC in 1914 as a starting point, and to compare it to the proposals from both sub-committees. The respective mandates used words that this be “a common church order maintaining the principles, structure and essential provisions of the Church Order of Dort”. This, however, was not interpreted to mean a slavish following of each article, its wording and sequence in the church order.

The first item in this effort was a discussion on the need for, and place of an introduction in a church order. The CanRC introduction, as recommended by General Synod Lincoln 1992, provides an overview of the history of this church order. In the URCNA church order the introduction focuses more on a declaration of beliefs and the biblical basis for a church order. The URC church order also includes a section ‘Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government’. The URC committee considers these foundational principles to be fundamental. While specific wording could be revised or improved on, the principles as based on Holy Scriptures must remain.

Although adopted by an earlier Synod, the final status of these Principles among the churches has yet to be established. They currently read as follows:

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF REFORMED CHURCH GOVERNMENT

1. The church is the possession of Christ, who is the Mediator of the New Covenant
Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27
2. As Mediator of the New Covenant, Christ is the Head of the church.
Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18

3. Because the church is Christ's possession and He is its Head, the principles governing the church are not a matter of human preference, but of divine revelation.
Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:18
4. The universal church possesses a spiritual unity in Christ and in the Holy Scriptures.
Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20; I Timothy 3:15; II John 9
5. The Lord gave no permanent universal, national or regional offices to His church. The office of elder (presbyter/episkopos) is clearly local in authority and function; thus Reformed church government is Presbyterian, since the church is governed by elders, not by broader assemblies.
Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Titus 1:5
6. In its subjection to its Heavenly Head, the local church is governed by Christ from heaven, by means of His Word and Spirit, with the keys of the kingdom which He has given it for that purpose; and it is not subject to rule by sister churches who, with it, are subject to the one Christ
Matthew 16:19; Acts 20:28-32; Titus 1:5
7. Federative relationships do not belong to the essence or being of the church; rather, they serve the wellbeing of the church. However, even though the churches stand distinctly next to one another, they do not thereby stand disconnectedly alongside one another. Entrance into and departure from a federative relationship is strictly a voluntary matter.
Acts 15:1-35; Romans 15: 25-27; Colossians 4-16;
Titus 1:5; Revelation 1:11, 20
8. The exercise of a federative relationship is possible only on the basis of unity in faith and in confession.
I Corinthians 10:14-22; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:16-17
9. Member churches meet together in consultation to guard against human imperfections and to benefit from the wisdom of a multitude of counselors in the broader assemblies. The decision of such assemblies derives their authority from their conformity to the Word of God
Proverbs 11:14; Acts 15:1-35; I Corinthians 13:9-10;
II Timothy 3:16-17
10. In order to manifest our spiritual unity, local churches should seek the broadest possible contacts with other like-minded churches for their mutual edification and as an effective witness to the world.
John 17:21-23; Ephesians 4:1-6

11. The church is mandated to exercise its ministry of reconciliation by proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth.
Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 5:18-21
12. Christ cares for His church through the office-bearers whom He chooses.
Acts 6:2-3; I Timothy 3:1,8; 5:17
13. The Scriptures encourage a thorough theological training for the ministers of the Word.
I Timothy 2:14-16; 3:14; 4:1-5
14. Being the chosen and redeemed people of God, the church, under the supervision of the elders, is called to worship Him according to the Scriptural principles governing worship.
Leviticus 10:1-3; Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Psalm 95:1,2,6;
Psalm 100:4; John 4:24; I Peter 2:9
15. Since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, it is called through the teaching ministry to build up the people of God in faith.
Deuteronomy 11:19; Ephesians 4:11-16; I Timothy 4:6;
II Timothy 2:2; 3:16-17
16. Christian discipline, arising from God's love for His people, is exercised in the church to correct and strengthen the people of God, to maintain the unity and the purity of the church of Christ, and thereby bring honor and glory to God's name.
I Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:13; Hebrews 12:7-11
17. The exercise of Christian discipline is first of all a personal duty of every child of God, but when discipline by the church becomes necessary, it must be exercised by the elders of the church, the bearers of the keys of the kingdom.
Matthew 18:15-20; Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 5:13; I Peter 5:1-3

After an extensive discussion the meeting reached a consensus that the introduction of the proposed common church order should include: 1) a historical background, 2) the Scriptural and confessional basis, 3) foundational principles, and 4) headings of the four sections of the church order. Rev. Scheuers will prepare a draft introduction for discussion at a future meeting.

Much time was spent discussing the principle of 'jurisdiction'. This is an area where both federations have distinct views colored by tradition as well as recent experiences. The authority of the elders and minister is unquestionably one given to the church by the Lord. But what authority do broader assemblies have in the churches? Language that is mutually

acceptable must be found before articles that involve jurisdiction can be formulated. These articles must avoid language such as 'jurisdiction over', but should convey words and thoughts of 'original authority', 'derived authority', and 'delegated authority'. The respective committees will give more thought to this subject before it is dealt with again at a future meeting. Agreement was reached on wording of Art. 1 'The purpose of the church order', and Art. 2 'The three offices'. At this point it was decided to deal with subsequent articles without numbering them. Their proper sequence within the church order will be determined later. Agreement was reached on part of the articles dealing with the duties and the lawful calling of the ministers of the Word. Also provisional agreement was reached on articles dealing with ministers being bound to a particular church, and ministers coming without a congregation from another federation. The need today for an article dealing with 'Exceptional Gifts' (Dort Article 8) received much discussion. The individual committees will also consider this article before it is dealt with again at a future meeting. Provisional agreement was reached on articles dealing with provisions for the care of the minister and the retirement of the minister.

The last hour of the second day was used to review the agenda for the next meeting. In the mean time the respective committees will carefully study the various church orders, and be prepared to discuss the issues of jurisdiction, exceptional gifts, and the need for regional synods. The next meeting will take place D.V. February 13 and 14, 2003 at the URC of Dutton, MI, this being the more central location.

Appreciation was expressed to the Dutton URC for its hospitality and the exceptional help its secretary was able to give to the committee. Dr. Kloosterman, in his closing remarks, stated his thankfulness to the Lord for the brotherly manner in which the committee could proceed with its work. He wished that the churches of both federations would have seen and heard the fraternity and camaraderie so present in the discussions and deliberations. To God alone be the praise and glory.

Press Release of the
meeting of the combined committees of the
Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches
to propose a common church order
held February 13-14, 2003
at the Trinity United Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI

Present were: Dr. Nelson Kloosterman, Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond Sikkema and Mr. Harry Van Gorp, representing the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), and Dr. Jack DeJong, Mr. Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. John VanWoudenberg and Dr. Art Witten of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC).

Dr. Kloosterman opened the meeting with reading Isaiah 12 and prayer. He extended a word of welcome and acquainted the committee members with the beautiful facilities of the Trinity URC.

The minutes of the meeting of December 11-12, 2002 were reviewed and adopted with some modifications.

A motion to re-appoint Dr. Kloosterman as chairman, Rev. Sikkema as recorder of the minutes, and Mr. Nordeman to prepare the Press Release for this and subsequent meetings carried.

An agenda and timetable for the two days were adopted.

The Common Church Order articles provisionally adopted at the previous meeting were carefully reviewed and refined where necessary. Completed are the articles with the following headings: The Three Offices, Duties of the Minister, The Calling of Ordained Men within the Federation, Bound to a Particular Church, Bound for Life, The Support and Emeritation of the Minister. The article dealing with "Ordained Men without a Congregation Entering the Federation" was for the most part completed, including the requirement of an examination by classis, but still requires a discussion on which assembly would declare such men eligible for call. A final review and appropriate numbering will be done at the completion of the whole Church Order.

Once again, a vigorous discussion took place regarding jurisdiction; how does a "broader" assembly relate to a "narrower" assembly. Both committees had brought proposals to the table. It was decided to adopt a simple statement as follows: "The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction only and exclusively relating to matters properly before them." Wording specific to delegation and the binding character of decisions will be formulated later in article for that purpose.

As requested at the previous meeting, the Rev. Scheuers presented a proposed introduction to the Church Order. Again, an extensive discussion took place regarding the exact wording of the four components of this introduction: 1) Biblical and Confessional Basis, 2) Historical Background, 3) Foundational Principles and 4) Broad Divisions. The Committee decided to include in the Press Release the full wording of the adopted Introduction. The first sentence in the proposed Foundational Principles will serve to clarify the status of the Foundational Principles in relation to our Church Order.

Introduction

Biblical and Confessional Basis

We Reformed believers maintain that the standard for personal, public, and ecclesiastical life is God's Word, the inspired, infallible, and inerrant book of Holy Scripture. As a federation of churches we declare our complete subjection and obedience to that Word of God. We also declare that we are confessional churches, in that we believe and are fully persuaded that the Three Forms of Unity, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, summarize and do fully agree with the Word of God. Therefore, we unitedly subscribe to these Reformed Confessions.

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headship in the churches by His Word and Spirit through the ordained offices, for the sake of purity of doctrine, holiness of life, and order in the churches. The churches of our federation, although distinct, willingly display their unity and accountability, both to each other and especially to Christ, by means of our common Confessions and this Church Order.

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The Church Order adopted at Emden was revised at the Synods of Dordrecht (1574 and 1578), Middelburg (1581), and the Hague (1586), before being adopted by the well-known Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619). Our Church Order follows the principles and structure of the Church Order of Dordrecht.

Foundational Principles

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2. As Mediator of the New Covenant, Christ is the Head of the church.
Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18
3. Because the church is Christ's possession and He is its Head, the principles governing the church are determined not by human preference, but by Biblical teaching.
Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:18, II Timothy 3:16, 17
4. The catholic or universal church possesses a spiritual unity in Christ and in the Holy Scriptures.
Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20; I Timothy 3:15; II John 9
5. The Lord gave no permanent universal, national or regional offices to His church. The offices of minister, elder and deacon are local in authority and function. Therefore, a broader assembly governs the church only by way of delegation, and exists only when it is in session.
Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Ephesians 4:11-16; Titus 1:5

6. In its subjection to its Heavenly Head, the church is governed by Christ from heaven by means of His Word and Spirit with the keys of the kingdom, which He has given to the local church for that purpose. Therefore, no church may lord it over another church, nor may one office bearer lord it over another office bearer.
Matthew 16:19; 23:8; John 20:22, 23; Acts 20:28-32; Titus 1:5
7. Although churches exist in certain circumstances without formal federative relationships, the well-being of the church requires that such relationships be entered wherever possible. Entering into or remaining in such relationships should be voluntary; there is however a spiritual obligation to seek and maintain the federative unity of the churches by formal bonds of fellowship and cooperation.
Acts 11:22, 27-30; 15:22-35; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10; Revelation 1:11, 20
8. The exercise of a federative relationship is possible only on the basis of unity in faith and in confession.
I Corinthians 10:14-22; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:16-17
9. Member churches meet together in consultation to guard against human imperfections and to benefit from the wisdom of many counselors in the broader assemblies. The decisions of such assemblies derive their authority from their conformity to the Word of God
Proverbs 11:14; Acts 15:1-35; I Corinthians 13:9-10; II Timothy 3:16-17
10. In order to manifest our spiritual unity, churches should seek contact with other faithful, confessionally Reformed churches for their mutual edification and as an effective witness to the world.
John 17:21-23; Ephesians 4:1-6
11. The church is mandated to exercise its ministry of reconciliation by proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth.
Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 5:18-21
12. Christ cares for and governs His church through the office bearers, whom He chooses through the congregation.
Acts 1:23-26; 6:2-3; 14:23; I Timothy 3:1,8; 5:17
13. The Scriptures require that ministers, elders and deacons be thoroughly equipped for the suitable discharge of their respective offices.
I Timothy 3:2-9; 4:16; II Timothy 2:14-16; 3:14; 4:1-5

14. Being the chosen and redeemed people of God, the church, under the supervision of the Consistory, is called to worship Him according to the Scriptural principles governing worship.
Leviticus 10:1-3; Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Psalm 95:1,2,6;
Psalm 100:4; John 4:24;
I Peter 2:9
15. Since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, it is called through its teaching ministry to build up the people of God in faith.
Deuteronomy 11:19; Ephesians 4:11-16; I Timothy 4:6; II Timothy 2:2; 3:16-17
16. Christian discipline, arising from God's love for His people, is exercised in the church to correct and strengthen the people of God, to maintain the unity and the purity of the church of Christ, and thereby to bring honor and glory to God's name.
I Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:13; Hebrews 12:7-11
17. The exercise of Christian discipline is first of all a personal duty of every church member, but when official discipline by the church becomes necessary, it must be exercised by the Consistory of the church, to whom the keys of the kingdom are entrusted.
Matthew 18:15-20; John 20:22-23; Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 5:13; I Peter 5:1-3

Broad Divisions

Since we desire to honor the apostolic command that in the churches all things are to be done decently and in good order (I Corinthians 14:40), we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities under the following divisions:

- V. Offices (Articles 1-)
- VI. Assemblies (Articles -)
- VII. Worship and Ceremonies (Articles -)
- VIII. Discipline (Articles -)

We again discussed at some length the question whose responsibility it is to declare a man a candidate for the ministry. We agreed that, as in the deposition of a minister, in this matter the classis is also to be involved. The student must sustain a classical examination. We also discussed the necessity for, and procedure of consistorial involvement in the preparation and nurturing of a man for the ministry. We agreed that each committee, starting with article 4 of Dort, writes a proposal for discussion at our next meeting.

The committee took some time to review the need for an article dealing with admitting men to the ministry who have not pursued the regular course of study (old Dort article 8). This article could be helpful in times of calamity or distress. However, with a view to past abuse of this article in some

Reformed churches, and the potential for abuse of such an article in the future of the united churches, it was agreed by both committees that the churches will be better served by omitting such an article.

The issue of the role of regional synod and the role of the regional synodical deputies received some attention. Information was exchanged and a better understanding gained by this discussion. More time is needed to come to a final agreement. Also the method of delegation to broader assemblies received attention. The suggestion was accepted for both committees to prepare suitable adaptations of articles regarding the broader assemblies, including classes, regional and general synods, working from Articles 41, 44, 45, 47, 49 and 50 of Dort.

The next meeting will take place D.V. August 5-7, 2003 in Burlington, ON, Canada. In the mean time both committees will continue to study the remaining articles. Any proposals should be shared with other committee members at least one month prior to the next meeting. The Press Release was presented and approved. Rev. John VanWoudenberg closed the meeting with a brief meditation on John 12:1-8. He led in prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God, our Heavenly Father, for another meeting that could be conducted in brotherly harmony.

For the Committee
Gerard J. Nordeman

Press Release of the
meeting of the combined committees of the
Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches
to propose a common church order
held August 05-07, 2003
at the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church at
Burlington, ON

Present were: Dr. Nelson Kloosterman, Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond Sikkema and Mr. Harry Van Gulp, representing the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), and Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen, Mr. Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. John VanWoudenberg and Dr. Art Witten of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). Dr. Jack DeJong of the CanRC, due to reasons of health, attended the meeting on a limited basis.

On behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches Br. Nordeman welcomed the committee members and introduced Dr. Nederveen who will serve the CanRC committee as an advisor on an interim basis.

Dr. Kloosterman opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. He welcomed in particular Dr. Nederveen. It was agreed that Dr. Nederveen would fully participate in the work of the committee. An agenda and

timetable for the next three days were circulated and adopted. The minutes of the February 13-14, 2003 meeting were reviewed. It was agreed to add to these minutes the third consideration that was used to not include an article regarding 'exceptional gifts' (Dort Art. 8) in the proposed church order. These considerations are: 1) instances of abuse of this article in the past, especially in the experience of the URCNA, 2) potential abuse in the future, and 3) the churches' requirement that every minister be thoroughly trained for the ministry, a training that at present is readily available.

A review of the articles thus far adopted resulted in a few modifications.

The consideration that the function of a minister extends beyond the local congregation and is available for call among all the churches of the federation suggests that declaring a man eligible for call is not the task of a consistory but more appropriately that of a classis. This principle will be included in the appropriate article.

It was agreed that, when a vacant church wishes to call a minister for the second time during the same vacancy, classical approval is required.

The Dort provision for 'recent converts wishing to enter the ministry' is adequately covered in the proposed article headed "An Ordained Minister Without a Congregation Entering the Federation", where a requirement for "an adequate period of consistorial supervision" is stipulated.

An extended discussion took place on the division and alignment of churches, classes and synods. A consensus was reached that among the churches of the federation, four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod. The terms "classis" and "synod" designate either ecclesiastical assemblies or ecclesiastical regions. As assemblies, classes and synods exist only for the duration of their meetings. These assemblies are deliberative in nature.

Appropriate articles were formulated prescribing that those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be issued proper credentials by their delegating body, thereby receiving authorization to deal with all the matters properly placed before them; and that in all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, and only in an ecclesiastical manner. The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them. All matters must originate with a consistory and must first be considered by a classis and a regional synod before they may be considered by a general synod. Only those matters shall be considered in the broader assemblies that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches in common. Each broader assembly shall approve for publication a press release regarding its proceedings.

Regarding delegation to broader assemblies a consensus was reached that classis shall choose the delegates to both the regional synod and the general synod proportional to the number of classes participating. This would ensure a better distribution of delegates from among the churches. The exact formula still needs to be determined.

Agreements were also reached on the proposed wording of articles relating to the specific function and make-up of a classis and that a classis shall be held every four months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighboring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches that would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

Decisions regarding 'church visitors' include the understanding that classis shall appoint a number of its most experienced and competent ministers and elders to visit all the churches of the classis, and that at each church visit at least one of the visitors shall be a minister. A description of the specific task and function of the church visitors was agreed upon.

Agreements were also reached on the matters pertaining to archives, counselors, regional synod and deputies of regional synod. A regional synod, consisting of three or more classes in a region, shall ordinarily meet once per year. This synod shall deal only with such matters as are placed on its agenda by the member classes, and with appeals from consistories or church members who have previously processed their appeals through their consistory and classis.

Reports to the churches and synods of the two federations will be composed by each sub-committee and compared to ensure that in the areas of accomplishments and recommendations they are in full agreement.

The next meeting will take place D.V. November 4, 5, and 6, 2003.

At the close of the meeting Dr. Jack DeJong informed the meeting that because of his health he can no longer function effectively as an active member of the committee. This makes it necessary for him to resign from the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity as well as the sub-committee for the church order. It is with profound regret that the committee took note of this decision. Br. DeJong was thanked for his outstanding contribution, not only in this committee, but also for his committed efforts in the whole unity process. All the brothers wished him well. Dr. Kloosterman led in devotions and committed Dr. DeJong in the care of our Faithful Father.

The press release was read and approved for publication. In his closing remarks Dr. Kloosterman expressed his thankfulness to the Lord for the brotherly manner in which the committee could proceed with its work. A considerable amount of work could be accomplished. After Scripture reading and closing prayer by Rev. Sikkema, the meeting was adjourned.

For the committee
Gerard J. Nordeman

**THE REPORT OF
THE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
OF THE
CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

To The Committee for Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
Reporting to the General Synod of the
Canadian Reformed Churches
Meeting in Chatham, Ontario
On February 10, 2004

Esteemed Brothers,

Herewith we submit to you a report outlining our mandate and its execution.

I. MANDATE

The General Synod of Neerlandia 2001 made the following decision:

“to give the Committee re: *Theological Education* the following mandate:

- 1.4.1. To work closely with the committee re: theological education appointed by the URCNA synod;
- 1.4.2. To evaluate the current situation as to theological education within the CanRC and URCNA;
- 1.4.3. To develop a proposal concerning theological education within the new federation keeping in mind that:
 - 1.4.3.1. The new federation should retain at least one federational theological school at which the board of governors, the professors and teaching staff are appointed by synod;
 - 1.4.3.2. Attention should be given as to what to do in the case of an aspiring candidate to the ministry who does not have adequate instruction in significant courses in Reformed Doctrine, in Reformed Church Polity, or in Reformed Church History.
- 1.4.4. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
- 1.4.5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.”

(ACTS GS 2001, Art. 95)

2. URC COMMITTEE MANDATE

Our Committee also decided to inform you of the mandate of the Committee for Theological Education for Ministers of the United Reformed Churches. It reads as follows:

“that this committee work together with the Canadian Reformed Committee to draft proposals for theological education to our respective synods in preparation for an eventual plan of union.”
(Article XLV)

3. APPOINTMENTS

The General Synod of Neerlandia 2001 also made the following appointments:

“4.4. Theological Education Committee: Cl. Stam, W. Smouter, C. VanDam (convener); J. Visscher.”
(ACTS, GS 2001, Art. 98)

4. MEETINGS

Your Committee met on Sept. 6, 2001, Jan. 30, 2002, Sept. 4, 2002 and Sept. 5, 2003, at the Theological College building in Hamilton, Ontario. These meetings were chaired by Prof. Dr. C. van Dam as convener. The Rev. J. Visscher was appointed secretary.

5. FURTHER APPOINTMENTS

Br. W. Smouter informed the Committee that due to a large number of commitments he would not be able to serve. The remaining members discussed and reviewed the situation. It was decided to ask Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes and Mr. K.J. Veldkamp, a former governor, to augment the ranks of the Committee. It was the opinion of the existing members that the workload warranted these additional appointments and that these brothers would strengthen the ability of the Committee to do its work.

Authorization for this action is partly based on the ruling of Synod 1983 that “the Committees shall have the right, in case a vacancy occurs, in order to fulfill their mandate to bring their membership up to its original strength” (Acts, Art. 175). The Committee realizes that it has gone beyond this provision by adding one extra person; however, seeing the nature, scope and importance of our work, as well as the qualifications of the brothers, viz. in educational and legal matters, we trust that the churches will support this course of action.

6. ASSIGNED TASKS

After a careful review of the mandate, the Committee decided it should become acquainted with those institutions that currently train most of the students entering into the URCNA, namely Mid-America Theological Seminary in Dyer, IN, and Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, CA.

To carry out these tasks it was decided to appoint Prof. N.H. Gootjes and the Rev.Cl. Stam to visit the former seminary, and Prof. C. van Dam and the Rev.J. Visscher to visit the latter. Reports of these visits have been appended. It should be noted that the Rev. Stam was unable to visit Mid-America and that the Rev.J. Visscher took his place.

It was also decided to invite the URCNA Committee to visit the Theological College in Hamilton, ON, at their earliest convenience.

7. QUESTIONS POSED

On Feb. 14, 2003, we received a letter from our “counterpart” Committee in the URCNA asking a number of questions about “a synodically-controlled seminary” – its necessity and benefit. Our Committee responded with a paper entitled: “Why Do The Canadian Reformed Churches Have Their Own Seminary?” This paper has been appended.

From the Committee of the URCNA we received a statement on this same matter. This too has been appended.

8. NO JOINT MEETING

Much to our regret we have to report that thus far there has not been a joint meeting of our respective committees. Various attempts have been made and currently another is being discussed and may take place before General Synod 2004. Should that happen we will send you a supplementary report.

The inability to meet thus far can be ascribed to a number of different factors. It took some time for both committees to work out and develop their respective mandates. It so happens that almost all of the appointees on both committees have very busy schedules. Then too, there is the fact that Committee members are spread throughout North America.

In spite of these factors, be assured that there has been written and verbal contact during the last years and that soon we hope to have face-to-face contact on a committee level.

9. UNFINISHED MANDATE

From the above you will have gathered that our Committee is not able as yet to supply you with a “proposal concerning theological education within the new federation.”

10. FUTURE MANDATE

It would be presumptuous for this Committee to suggest to your assembly what to do about our continued existence; however, we do trust that you will give serious consideration to continuing our mandate with the hope that we will be able to serve the next General Synod, and the churches, with a finalized report.

11. CLOSING

We wish you the blessings of the Lord in all of your deliberations and decisions.

The Committee,

N.H. Gootjes
Cl. Stam
C. van Dam
K.J. Veldkamp
J. Visscher

September 5, 2003

APPENDICES

Appendix # 1 –

Report of the Visit Made to Westminster Theological Seminary from Feb. 8 – 12, 2002 by Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam and the Rev. Dr. J. Visscher

Introduction

On Thursday, Feb. 7, 2002, two members of the Theological Education Committee, namely C. Van Dam and J. Visscher, traveled to Escondido, California, in order to visit Westminster Theological Seminary. Prof. Van Dam left from Toronto and Rev. Visscher left from Vancouver. We met in Los Angeles, stayed over night in that city and continued on to Escondido the next morning.

We arrived in Escondido the following day and toured the Seminary. It is located on a very impressive and hilltop site. A number of modern buildings grace that site, namely a library and office complex, a student union and classroom building and a recently completed chapel. The library contains about 60,000 volumes and is part of a consortium of theological college libraries in southern California. The faculty is composed of 12 full-time professors (as well as 15 part-time professors) and a student body of 186 in 2000-2001.

Lunch With Escondido URC Pastors

At 12:00 noon we met for lunch with the Revs. Steven Donovan and Phil Vos. Together they pastor one of the largest URC Churches, the Escondido URC. Over lunch a wide range of topics was discussed. We began by getting acquainted and exchanged details about our respective churches and federations. From there we moved on to various issues in the relations between our respective churches: covenant, justification, law and gospel, seminary training, and the Escondido Overture that went to the URC Synod.

All in all, it was a very useful exercise in building bridges, sharing information and clearing-up misunderstandings. Our impression was that if these two brothers are representative of the URC, there is good hope for progress in the ongoing merger discussions with the URC.

Meeting With the Representatives of Westminster Seminary

At 3:00 p.m. we met together with Dr. Robert Godfrey, President of WTS and Dr. Darryl Hart, Dean of Students (both are also professors in church history). We expressed appreciation for their willingness to meet with us. They in turn received us most cordially. We then started with brief introductions of who we are, introduced our Churches and the College and explained the mandate of our Committee.

We also used the opportunity to present Dr. Godfrey and Dr. Hart with a copy of the following publications for their seminary library: the current *Handbook* of the Theological College; C. Van Dam, ed., *The Liberation: Causes and Consequences* (1995) and C. Van Dam, ed., *The Challenge of Church Union* (1993).

Some Historical Information

In particular, we informed them about the mission of the Theological College and why it is a federational school. The brothers from WTS then explained its origin and why it is an independent institution. The background of WTS-CA is found in its namesake in Philadelphia. WTS-Phila was established in 1929 in the midst of the Modernist Controversy in the Presbyterian Church in the USA. At that time Princeton Theological Seminary was the pre-eminent seminary of the northern Presbyterian Church but had been re-organized to allow for theological liberalism. Prof. J. Gresham Machen left Princeton and consciously organized an independent seminary to prevent future liberalism from destroying the church. WTS-CA was started in 1980 as a branch of WTS-Phila but became an independent institution in 1984.

As an independent seminary, WTS-CA serves a broad constituency of Presbyterian and Reformed churches. It is also one of the two seminaries that supplies most of the ministers to the URC, along with Mid-America in Dyer, IN. Another fact of note is that it is also one of the main training

schools for the Korean Presbyterian churches. WTS California hopes to continue to train students for the URC but then as an independent seminary.

Independent or Federational

When asked if it would consider becoming a federational seminary, the answer was given that this was not very likely given its past history, its broad constituency and its present Board of Trustees. Currently, it offers courses in the church government of Westminster, as well as the church polity of Dordt. Courses are also given in the Three Forms of Unity, as well as the Westminster Standards, in order to equip students from both Presbyterian and Reformed backgrounds.

Reformed Commitment

Dr. Godfrey assured us that WTS is committed to being a strong Reformed seminary which is sensitive to the needs of the churches. As such it has as its basis both the Westminster Standards as well as the Three Forms of Unity. When the question was asked whether WTS would be willing to make changes in its curriculum to accommodate possible demands from a new united church, their response was positive. In addition, we were informed that WTS wishes to cooperate fully with other institutions, including a federational school, which in the future would also train ministers for such a church.

Relations with MID-AMERICA

As for its relationship to Mid-America Reformed Seminary (MID-AMERICA), we were informed that there is at present no formal working relationship with that institution. On a personal level, there is a good working relationship between Dr. Godfrey and a number of members of the Mid-America faculty. It should be noted that these two institutions are geographically distant from each other and that WTS may well serve a wider spectrum of Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

Churches

With respect to the churches that WTS serves, there are no formal agreements. At one time there was such an agreement with the RCUS but this was terminated because of disagreement over the interpretation of Genesis 1. The OPC has in the past sent an official delegation and WTS continues to train men for the ministry in that church.

The Board of Trustees

The seminary is governed by a Board of Trustees which consists of 18 members who serve three year terms. Every year one third of the Board retires. Members on the board can be re-appointed. This Board is a self-

perpetuating body of which no more than one-third to one-half are ministers. All ministers and elders serving as trustees must be members of confessionally Reformed churches. They are chosen on the basis of geographical and "denominational" considerations so that the Board somewhat reflects the student body and churches that are served. A significant number of trustees are from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the URCNA.

The Faculty

With regard to the faculty, the professors are bound by their ecclesiastical vows and subscribe to the confessions when becoming a member of the faculty. It was also pointed out that subscription has a different history in the Presbyterian churches than it does in the churches originating from the European continent. In Presbyterianism, professors and ministers may ask for "exceptions" from points of doctrine that they disagree with as spelled out in the Westminster Standards. When new faculty members are appointed, they are asked about what exceptions, if any, they maintain.

Should a professor's teaching give cause for concern, a committee may be appointed by the Seminary to investigate the matter. If a church disciplines a faculty member, WTS would abide by its decision unless such decision would be contravention of Scripture or confession.

In order to promote good harmony among the faculty, a faculty lunch is regularly held where current theological issues are discussed together. In addition, the Board of Trustees discusses a confessional topic together with the faculty once a year.

As for the recruitment of new faculty members, WTS focuses on confessionally Reformed men. It especially wants men who love the church and are committed to Reformed scholarship.

Students

As for students entering WTS, they need a positive reference from their church, but there is no specific requirement that they adhere to the classic Reformed confessions. Seeing that the faculty is Reformed, WTS does not see a need to demand that students entering the seminary be Reformed. The overwhelming majority is Reformed. At the same time, WTS sees an opportunity here to act as a "missionary institution" and their teaching has had a positive impact on baptist and evangelical students. In this connection, the Korean Presbyterian Churches, which have been ravaged by Pentecostalism, have received considerable assistance from WTS.

Accreditation

We also discussed seminary accreditation and were informed that this is a very difficult process, consuming a considerable amount of time and

money. WTS is accredited by ATS. This is important for WTS because it allows students to apply for federal student loans. They could well understand that the Theological College has been hesitant to start on this process, especially because this school does not need it for accrediting students for the purpose of government loans. It has been their, and it still is Hamilton's, experience that in practice students from an institution not accredited by ATS who wish to pursue graduate studies are usually able to do so without insurmountable difficulty.

Questions Addressed to Us

Questions were also asked of us as representatives of the Canadian Reformed Churches. In response to the query whether we would have objections against two "denominational" seminaries, we indicated that our mandate specified that there should be one federational school. We would not object to two if there was one for each country to which students in the respective countries would then be expected to go. Questions were also raised in the areas of covenant and justification. Clarification was given.

In particular it was stated that as Canadian Reformed Churches we are not in favour of binding extra-confessional statements. As well, there appears to be an information gap between WTS and what the Canadian Reformed Churches stand for. Geographical distance has something to do with this.

Conclusion

Our overall impression is a very positive one. We were well-received and were able to have a frank and open discussion as brothers who seek the well being of the Churches.

Breakfast with Prof. Dr. R.S. Clark and Prof. Dr. M.S. Horton

Early the next morning, Saturday, Feb. 9, we had a breakfast meeting with Dr. Michael Scott Horton, associate professor of Apologetics and Historical Theology and Dr. Robert Scott Clark, associate professor of Church History. After some words of introduction, we proceeded to deal with a wide range of theological matters and historic personalities. We focused on matters of justification, sanctification, faith and works, covenant of works and so forth.

It should be stated that in our exchange we tried to place the CanRC position on a number of issues within the framework of the influence of A. Kuyper on the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the events of the Liberation, as well as the post-war immigration to Canada. In connection with the latter, it was stressed that it was never the intention of the immigrants to start a new Reformed church but rather to join themselves to an already existing Reformed church. When that became impossible in connection with the CRC and PRC, it was decided to institute the CanRC.

The present desire for unity on the part of the CanRC with the URC is to be seen as a continuation of that original intent.

It was also stressed that in the future it would be beneficial if the lines of communication between people like ourselves could be kept open for the sake of our respective federations. Invitations were extended to both professors to visit the Theological College in Hamilton and to meet with both past and present members of the faculty.

On the whole, the exchange was open, frank, friendly and productive. Hopefully, a number of caricatures were removed, misunderstandings cleared up and a basis was laid for continued communication in the future.

Sunday in the Escondido URC

On Sunday, Feb. 10, 2002, we attended the 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. worship services in the Escondido URC. The liturgy in these services was very similar to ours, except for silent prayer offered at the start. Rev.P.J. Vos preached in both services, first on LD 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism in the morning and then on Luke 23: 34 in the evening. Both were faithful to the Word, clear and edifying.

For lunch we were invited to the Spoelstra residence, together with br. and sr. S. Howerzyl. This proved to be a most hospitable and informative visit. After the evening service we were invited to the residence of br. and sr. H. Den Boer in Carlsbad. Once again the hospitality was great and the fact that br. de Boer is a very active and leading member of the Escondido Church proved to be very helpful in sharing information.

Another Breakfast

The next morning we were up early again in order to have breakfast with the Rev. Phil J. Vos. He had invited us over Sunday evening, but because of the de Boer invite, we decided to meet together the next morning. It can be said that this second meal together was a time of solidification. We were able to build on recently established ties, and we were also able to exchange even more ideas, insights and data. Above all, it was stressed that closer ties need to be forged between not just between the seminaries in Escondido and Hamilton, but also between both federations.

Homeward Bound

After breakfast we visited the Seminary once again in order to obtain some additional information that Dr. Clark had mentioned. We also took another look at the Seminary library. After that we drove back to Los Angeles and early the next morning, Feb. 12, 2002, we headed home.

Respectfully Submitted,
C. van Dam, J. Visscher

Appendix #2

REPORT OF THE VISIT MADE TO MID AMERICA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN DYER, INDIANA FROM MAY 28 -31, 2002, BY PROF. DR. N.H. GOOTJES AND THE REV. DR. J. VISSCHER

Introduction

On Wednesday, May 29 and Thursday, May 30, 2002, two members of the Theological Education Committee, namely N.H. Gootjes and J. Visscher visited Mid America Theological Seminary in Dyer, Indiana. The purpose of this visit was to familiarize the Committee via its two representatives with this Seminary.

The travel arrangements for this visit were such that the Rev. J. Visscher left Vancouver on May 28, 2002. Prof. N.H. Gootjes left the following day from Toronto. We met at O'Hare Airport in Chicago and traveled to Dyer, Indiana together. We arrived at the Seminary shortly before 2:00 p.m.

Once there we were met by Prof. Dr. N. Kloosterman who showed us around the still new, beautiful and spacious building. Unlike WTS-CA, the physical plant of Mid-America Theological Seminary (henceforth MID-AMERICA) consists of one large building. In it are housed the library, the classrooms, faculty offices and lounge, bookstore and administrative facilities. Architecturally, a large bell tower distinguishes the building. Undoubtedly such a single structure makes for ready access and serves well particularly during the colder months of the year.

Meeting with the Faculty

A little after 2:00 p.m. we met with the entire faculty of MID-AMERICA, namely,

Rev. J. Mark Beach, Associate Professor of Ministerial Studies
 Dr. N.D. Kloosterman, Professor of Ethics and New Testament
 Rev. Alan D. Strange, Assistant Professor of Church History
 Rev. Mark D. VanderHart, Associate Professor of Old Testament
 Studies and Ministerial Apprenticeship Program Director
 Dr. C.P. Venema, Professor of Doctrinal Studies, Dean of
 Faculty and President

As President, Prof. Dr. C.P. Venema opened the meeting with the reading of Scripture, prayer, and a word of welcome. Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes responded and presented each faculty member with a copy of the publication *Always Obedient*, edited by J. Geertsema.

Thereafter, Prof Gootjes was given the floor to introduce the mandate of our Theological Education Committee to the faculty. Mention was made of the fact that a visit had already been made to WTS-CA and

that our URC counterpart committee had been invited to visit the Theological College in Hamilton, Ontario.

Prof. Gootjes then proceeded to ask a number of questions, from which the following highlights have been gleaned:

Church Links

MID-AMERICA has no direct or official relationship with any church federation, although it identifies itself most closely with the United Reformed Churches. The largest part of the student body comes from these churches. In addition, it also has students from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church in the United States, the Christian Reformed Church, the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in America.

It would not be inaccurate to state that the URC, the OPC and the RCUS are the churches from which MID-AMERICA draws most of its students. Asked about how relations are maintained with the churches, the reply was that the principal link is through the confessions of the church. Also, all of the Faculty members are ordained ministers (Beach -CRC, Kloosterman- URC, Strange, OPC, VanderHart- URC, Venema -CRC). A faculty member needs to have at least five years of pastoral experience.

It was stated that the Faculty is as responsible to the churches as the churches demand. Any questions raised by the churches are weighed with care and answered promptly. The professors preach in local churches. They consider themselves to be in a very close relationship with the supporting churches.

As for the students, they are involved in various forms of pastoral work in the local churches. They are also expected to be committed to a local church, since "floating" is strongly discouraged.

The professors make it a point to attend meetings of the various classes, presbyteries, assemblies and synods.

It should be noted too that MID-AMERICA is on the list of "approved seminaries" of both the RCUS and OPC.

Board of Trustees

In terms of governance, MID-AMERICA functions under a Board of Trustees composed of 18 members. These members serve three years terms and one third retire every year. Replacements on the Board are selected by the Board itself.

In connection with this set-up, comments were made that the set-up of MID-AMERICA has more in common with a Kuyperian model. This has reference to the fact that the Theological Faculty of the Free University in Amsterdam was not a church school, while the Theological School in Kampen was church run. (Prof. Gootjes pointed out that this comparison was not completely accurate seeing that members to the Theological Faculty in Amsterdam were nominated by the churches). In any case, no

mechanism exists at present whereby churches can elect to the Board of Trustees of MID-AMERICA.

There is also a certain co-relation between the students and the trustees. Seeing that most of the students are from the URC, most of the trustees come from that same church. As well, there are 3 trustees from the OPC and several from the RCUS.

Confessional Subscription

All Trustees and Faculty members sign a Form of Subscription which is very similar to the one that comes from Dordrecht. It has been modified for seminary purposes, and differs slightly as it is applied to Trustees and Faculty. It should also be noted that these Forms include not only the Three Forms of Unity, but also the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Catechisms of Westminster are not included.

Confessional Adherence

Not only does each faculty member sign the Form of Subscription, but in addition the confessions form an integral part in all the areas of teaching. They are elaborated on in dogmatics and practical theology. There is a course on Catechism Preaching as part of the curriculum.

As for the Westminster Confession of Faith, it is blended in with the Three Forms of Unity. The Faculty is convinced that these confessions are all mutually supportive of one another. It is aware of differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession of Faith, but does not view these differences as major.

With regard to their subscription to the confessions, it should be noted that faculty members are questioned before their appointment by both the Board and the Faculty. One member of the Faculty informed us that his consistory interviews him on an annual basis, and that members of the consistory are allowed to sit in on all of his classes.

In addition, Board members visit the lectures on a regular basis and report back to the Board. They also meet with the professors.

Students and the Confessions

Seeing that almost all of the students come from conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches they are not strangers to the Reformed confessions. Still, students are not asked whether or not they agree with the confessions as a requirement for enrolling, but rather whether they are ready to comply with them and to be instructed in them.

In the past there was a student of Reformed Baptist persuasion who was required to sit under the instruction, even if he dissented from parts of it.

Accreditation

MID-AMERICA is pursuing accreditation, although not with the American Theological Schools (ATS), but with an organization called Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS). The reason for this course of action seems to be related mostly to government recognition with an eye to student loans and charitable tax status, both in the US and Canada. The Faculty members agreed that the process leading to accreditation is not without its difficulties and challenges.

Relations with Westminster Theological Seminary in California

There is no official relationship with WTS-CA even though both institutions train most of the students who later minister in the URC. Differences between them have to do with history and geography. MID-AMERICA considers itself to be more intimately linked with the history of the URC, as well as being more rooted in continental Calvinism.

From a confessional perspective these two institutions are close. They can be viewed as sister institutions even though there is little interaction between them. It should also be mentioned that while WTS-CA offers a number of degree granting programs, MID-AMERICA offers only one and that has to do with ministerial training.

Prime Focus

Throughout the discussions and interactions it became clear that MID-AMERICA sees itself primarily as a ministerial training school. The only program that they offer focuses on this. They do not accept female students. They do not have separate degree granting programs in missions, counseling or evangelism. Everything is geared towards ministry in the local church.

Atmosphere

Your representatives were well-received and a very friendly atmosphere existed throughout the discussions. No offence was taken at even the most probing questions.

MID-AMERICA and Future Merger

As for what the future holds and how MID-AMERICA sees itself in a possible merger between the CanRC and URC, it was made clear that MID-AMERICA is serious about remaining closely aligned to the churches that it serves currently, particularly the URC, and has no intentions of becoming a "denominational seminary" of the URC.

The suggestion was made that perhaps a merged church could "adopt" MID-AMERICA and request representation on the Board, as well as entering into other arrangements. Seeing that the other Faculty members

did not react to this suggestion, it is hard to gauge whether this has real support or is even feasible.

Exception was taken by them to the word "independent" as in "independent seminary" since it is their view that several churches already "govern" the seminary through their representing governors.

Fellowship

After the meeting was closed, we were invited to join the Faculty for dinner at a local restaurant. Unfortunately Prof. Kloosterman could not join us since he was committed elsewhere. The food was delicious and the fellowship was warm.

Meeting in Oak Glen United Reformed Church

That same evening a public meeting had been organized by the Rev. Todd Joling, pastor of one of the local URC churches. This meeting was held in the Oak Glen URC which at the moment does not have a full-time minister (Prof. VanderHart serves as associate pastor in this church).

The following speeches were held: Rev. Joling on "A Brief Review of Our Ecumenical Phases and Current Relationship", Prof. VanderHart on "A Brief History of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches", Rev. Visscher on "A View of the Similarities and Differences of the CanRC and the URC", and Prof. Gootjes on "A Progress Report on Three Committees: Church Order, Theological Education and Song Book."

Somewhere around 40 -50 people were in attendance. We were told that the short notice of the meeting, as well as numerous school graduations, effected the turnout. Be that as it may, any number of pertinent questions were asked and answered.

Following the speeches and question period, a time of fellowship was held. There we circulated among the people and were asked quite a number of additional questions. On the whole, we may inform you that there was much appreciation for what was said and that we were received most cordially. Hopefully, this extra effort (beyond our immediate task) will also enhance the process known as "Phase 2."

Homeward Bound

The next day Prof. Gootjes was transported back to O'Hare Airport and flew back to Toronto. Rev. Visscher departed early the next morning for Vancouver.

All in all, a profitable time was had and it will hopefully result in a better understanding on our part of the workings of MID-AMERICA in preparation for further discussions on matters of theological education.

Humbly Submitted,
N.H. Gootjes, J. Visscher

Appendix #3

WHY DO THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES HAVE THEIR OWN SEMINARY?

In answering this question, the following will be considered.

- A. Exegetical Arguments for the Church's Responsibility to Train their Ministers
 1. "Entrust to Reliable Men who will also be Qualified to Teach Others"
 2. The Church is "the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth"
 3. The Task of the Church is to Preach the Gospel
 4. Conclusions

- B. Historical Notes on the Role of the Church in the Training for the Ministry
 1. The Medieval and Reformation Eras
 2. Nineteenth Century Holland
 3. North American Developments
 4. Conclusions

A. Exegetical Arguments for the Church's Responsibility to Train their Ministers

Whose responsibility is the training for ministers of the Word? The church's or an organization which is independent of the church it seeks to serve and over which the church has no direct supervision or responsibility?

In examining what the Bible has to say on the topic, we will need to start with 2 Timothy 2:2. In the history of the Reformed churches in The Netherlands, this has been a key passage for arguing that it is the church's task to take care of the training of ministers. This is also the only Scripture that is specifically mentioned in the official account of the discussions that led to the decision of the 1891 Synod of the churches of the Secession to maintain the principle that the church is called to maintain their own training for the ministry of the Word.¹

As a historical note, it should also be mentioned that the Rev. J. Kok discussed many biblical passages on the topic at hand in his notable address delivered on a special day held for the Theologische Hogeschool in Kampen, The Netherlands, on July 4, 1909. This speech was subsequently published in expanded form as *De Opleiding tot den dienst des Woords: "voor de kerk, door de kerk"* (*The Training for the Ministry of the Word: "By the Church and for the Church"*)²

For the present purpose, let us consider 2 Timothy 2:2 and 1 Timothy 3:15, followed by a brief look at the task of the church. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn.

1. “Entrust to Reliable Men who will also be Qualified to Teach Others”

2 Timothy 2:2

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. (NIV)

The apostle Paul is addressing Timothy as his own spiritual son. Paul also called Timothy “my fellow worker” (Rom 16:21), “God’s fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ” (1 Thess 3:2), and “servant (*diakonos*) of Jesus Christ” (1 Tim 4:6). Timothy had received the laying on of hands by the elders (1 Tim 4:14) and was exhorted to preach the Word (1 Tim 4:11-13). He did the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5). Clearly he had an important position of leadership in the church at Ephesus.³ To him the apostle, for example, gave instructions about the office of elder (1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17-19) and entrusted the general care of the congregation (cf. e.g., 1 Tim 4:11-14; 2 Tim 2:14-19).

A key concern for the apostle, who was facing certain death (2 Tim 4:6, 18), was that the gospel be safeguarded (2 Tim 1:13-14; cf. 3:14-17) and proclaimed in truth (2 Tim 4:1-5). In this general context, he mandates Timothy as a close associate of the apostle (“my son” - 2 Tim 2:1), to entrust to reliable men the gospel he has heard so that they may be qualified to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2).

It is notable when one considers 2 Timothy 2:2 that the apostle specifies that what needs to be entrusted to others is that which Timothy heard from Paul “in the presence of many witnesses.” Although the witnesses may refer to those present at Timothy’s ordination when the apostle exhorted Timothy to bring sound teaching (1 Tim 1:14), the reference to witnesses probably goes beyond that. It includes all those who have witnessed the public preaching and teaching ministry of the apostle Paul.⁴ The phrase “in the presence of many witnesses” thus emphasizes that what is to be handed down is not secret or esoteric but can be testified as the gospel by the many who have heard the apostle preach and teach. The full gospel is to be passed on.

It is also to be noted that the task of entrusting the gospel to others is given to a man like Timothy who had received the laying on of hands and held office in the church. The principle appears to be that those holding office in the church must train office bearers for the church. Office bearers ordained by the church work on behalf of the church.⁵

Here we have a key apostolic mandate for the transmitting of the gospel from one generation to the other with the express purpose that the teaching of this gospel be continued in the future. Those who preach the Word must train others to do the same. “This, then, may be considered as the earliest trace of the formation of *a theological school*, - a school which has for its object not merely the instruction of the ignorant, but the protection and maintenance of a definite body of doctrine.”⁶

As further background to the above, it one can note that behind the relationship that the apostle Paul had with Timothy, there was ultimately the teaching relationship that the Lord Jesus had with his disciples. In the gospels, the Lord is often addressed as teacher (e.g. Matt 8:19; 12:38; 22:16, 24, 36) and he refers to himself as the one Teacher, (“you have one Teacher, the Christ” Matt 23:10). The response to one significant teaching event was that “the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matt 7:28-29). His teaching relationship with his disciples also meant that they were always “with him” (Mk 3:14; Acts 1:21). It is also apparent that this teaching process did not stop with the ascension of our Lord; rather among the commands given to the disciples was that they, in turn, would need to teach those whom they discipled and baptized (Matthew 28:20 “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”).

The apostle Paul took along on his missionary journeys several young men whom he left behind to work in congregations. This happened to Timothy who was with Paul (1 Thess 1:1; Rom 16:21) but who also stayed behind in Ephesus to give further instruction for congregational life (1 Tim 1:4, 18), Titus (Titus 1:5) and Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25). This was an early form of theological education, from minister to minister.

2. The Church is “the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth”

1 Timothy 3:15

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. (1 Tim 3:14-15 NIV)

It is important to notice that the church is called “the pillar and foundation of the truth.” The immediate context of qualifications for overseers and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13), as well as behaving properly in God’s household, the church (1 Tim 3:14) suggests that certain kinds of behaviour can be expected by virtue of the fact that the church is “the pillar and foundation of the truth.” Those who are members are to live up to the ideals of what the church stands for. They must live according to the truth of the gospel.⁷

However, the fact that the church is here called “the pillar and foundation of the truth” carries a major implication for our topic as well. While the precise meaning of the Greek terms translated by “the pillar and foundation of the truth” can be debated,⁸ it is clear that this characterization indicates that central to the task of the church is to uphold, maintain and support the truth which is the gospel (1 Tim 2:4; 4:3; John 17:17).⁹ “The church is fundamental to the gospel ministry.”¹⁰ To the church the gospel has been entrusted (John 17:8, 14). Calvin put it thus: “By these words [of 1 Tim 3:15], Paul means that the church is the faithful keeper of God’s truth in

order that it may not perish in the world. For by its ministry and labour God willed to have the preaching of his Word kept pure and to show himself the Father of a family while he feeds us with spiritual food and provides everything that makes for our salvation."¹¹ When Calvin comments on the meaning of the church as pillar of truth in his commentary, he notes "In consequence, this commendation applies to the ministry of the Word; for if it is removed, God's truth will fall."¹² If the above is the case, then training pastors and teachers belongs to the task of the church as the pillar and foundation of the truth and it is not properly the responsibility of an organization independent of the church.

3. **The Task of the Church is to Preach the Gospel**

Christ to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given (Matt 28:18) gives offices to his church (Eph 4:11-13) and through his Spirit calls and equips them to serve (cf. Acts 20:28). The office of minister is therefore a gift of Christ to his church. Thus when a minister is ordained according to the classical Reformed ordination form, he needs to answer positively the question: "Do you feel in your heart that God himself, through his congregation, has called you to this holy ministry?"

There are two basic elements that need to be noticed here. First, the Lord calls to office and therefore determines how that service is to be executed. Second, the office is given to the church and functions within the context of the church.

The proclamation of the gospel belongs to the very heart and kernel of being church (cf. Matt 28:19-20; Rom 10:14). If the church has the task to proclaim the gospel through the office of preacher given to her (Eph 4:11), then it follows that the church has the first responsibility to see to it that the gospel can continue to be proclaimed by training future ministers of the Word. This is not a duty that can be readily given to another organization. The proclamation of the gospel belongs to the very reason why the church exists. Without preaching there is no church!

How can the church pray for more labourers in the harvest (cf. Matt 9:37-38) without at the same time taking responsibility that good labourers are available, in so far as she is able?

To ask the question is to answer it. As we see in 2 Timothy 2:2 "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."

4. **Conclusions**

On the basis of the above, three (somewhat overlapping) conclusions can be drawn.

1. The apostolic injunction to Timothy, "*the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*" (2 Tim 2:2), indicates that those ordained by the

church should work to supply the church with future preachers. They will have to ensure that these ministers are able to preach and teach.

2. The church as "*the pillar and foundation of the truth*" (1 Tim 3:15) indicates that to her the gospel has been entrusted and therefore to her falls the responsibility to proclaim and maintain that gospel, also by training faithful pastors and teachers.

3. Since the office of preacher has been given to the church, it is the task of the church to preach the gospel. This responsibility also means that the church has to see to it that this proclamation can continue. Besides praying for future labourers, the church must therefore also provide training so that such labourers can be properly prepared and sent out.

B. Historical Notes on the Role of the Church in the Training for the Ministry.

In order to put the whole issue of responsibility for theological education into our present day perspective, it may be useful to have a brief historical overview.¹³

1. The Medieval and Reformation Eras

The specific form which the training for the ministry assumed often depended to a great extent on the historical circumstances. At some time during the patristic period, local overseers became regional bishops. This led to these bishops establishing schools where future ministers could be educated. To give an example, the Council of Orange 529 determined that bishops and presbyters had to open their houses for young men to train them as fathers, to instruct them in the Holy Scriptures and to educate them so they could assume their office. According to this church decision, theological training of future ministers was entrusted to ministers with regional or local authority. Such seminaries were founded in several places in Italy, in England, Gaul and Spain.¹⁴

During the later Middle Ages, universities came into existence and this changed the manner of education. Originally the universities consisted of groups of people devoted to study who were more or less self-sufficient. These students selected and supported teachers of their choice. Gradually, however, the universities organized themselves into formal schools, governed and funded by the cities. Rather than being supported by their students, the professors were in the employ of the city and paid by them. At the same time, these professors were subject to the jurisdiction of the church.¹⁵

When the Reformation of the church took place during the sixteenth century, the training for the ministry had to be reestablished. In agreement with the custom of that time when the government determined the public religion of their nations, this was done by the government. Calvin urged the

city council of Geneva to establish a seminary, as it was the right of the church to have an institute for theological training. Similarly, in the Palatinate it was the Elector Frederick who had changed the *Collegium Sapientiae* into a theological school, and had placed it under the supervision of the church council. The city of Leiden in the Netherlands, as a reward for their faithfulness, received a university from Prince William of Orange, which was first of all intended for establishing a training for the ministry.¹⁶

From the major ecclesiastical assemblies held in seventeenth century Holland, it is clear that the churches always insisted that the professors of theology be subject to the teaching of the church, even though they were appointed by the government to the universities. The Synod of Dordrecht of 1618-1619 determined that from now on "the theological professors must appear at synod and there give an account of their teaching and submit themselves to the judgment of synod."¹⁷

These examples date from times different from our own. Then the established church was closely connected with the state and lived under its patronage. As a result, theological education was also seen as being the responsibility of the government. However, the church did what it could to exercise their responsibility over those who taught future ministers.

Two changes took place in the nineteenth century. We will focus on what happened in The Netherlands.

2. Nineteenth Century Holland

The first change concerned the public universities. The Dutch Parliament adopted a law in 1876 which transformed the university departments of theology into those of religion, a shift in emphasis from revelation to piety. The theological professors were appointed by the university. However, the national church, the *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk* received the right to appoint one professor at each of the universities who would teach the doctrine of the church as an addition to the scholarly training given at the universities.¹⁸ However, since that time, theological education in the Netherlands takes place in the context of the separation of church and state. As a result, many parts of theology were taught from a (usually liberal) scholarly perspective, without consideration of the life of the church.

The second change which impacted on theological education was the establishing of theological seminaries outside of the control of the government. The Secession, a reformation movement beginning in 1834 within the tolerant national church, prompted a basic reconsideration of the way in which the training for the ministry should be organized. There was a desperate shortage of ministers within these churches, for during the early years, there were only seven ministers working within the seceded churches. However, within a year after the Secession had began, the number of congregations grew to about seventy. The few ministers did what they could, by, for instance, preaching three to four times on the Sundays. Worship services were also organized during the

week, so that some ministers preached anywhere between 15 and 20 times in a week.¹⁹ It was obvious to all that something needed to be done about the lack of ministers.

The churches decided that they should organize the training for the ministry. The provincial Synod of Groningen of 1839 appointed Hendrik De Cock to teach men who were suitable and willing to become ministers. In the province of Friesland, Rev. T.F. De Haan was appointed for the same task. When De Cock had passed away, De Haan accepted the request to teach the students from both provinces. The churches determined who would teach, and through these ministers they took care of the theological training, however primitive this may have been during those early years.²⁰

It was soon felt that this way of training future ministers was insufficient, and that there should be one theological school for the whole church. Rev. De Haan was charged to draw up a proposal for a theological school for all Secession churches. His proposal of appointing two ministers as full time teachers was bettered by the decision of Synod 1849 to appoint three ministers.²¹ When the seminary was officially opened in 1854, four ministers were charged to be "teachers of the theological school."²² The seminary of the Secession churches can be characterized as a church school, for ministers appointed by the general synod of these churches took charge of the theological training of its ministers.

Within the State Church, another reformation movement, called *Doleantie*, took place in 1886. Prior to that, in 1880, Dr. A. Kuiper, one of the leaders of the *Doleantie*, had already established a university.²³ This university began with three departments, including a department of theology. When the churches from the Secession and from the *Doleantie* discussed unification, theological education was a major point of discussion.

The churches of the Secession emphasized that the churches themselves should maintain a Theological School for the training of future ministers. In 1891, one year before the union, the Synod of the Secession churches adopted the proposal of Friesland by which the Synod maintained the principle that the church is called to have its own institution for the education of its ministers, at least as far as their theological training is concerned.²⁴

The General Synod of the *Doleantie* churches of 1891 was satisfied with the statement made by the Synod of the Secession churches concerning the training for the ministry. However, it decided to qualify it by declaring that the purpose of this statement is not: 1. to destroy the traditional reformed principle of free study; nor 2. to change the Reformed manner of ecclesiastical examination of future ministers; nor 3. to take anything away from the demand for scholarly study which had always been demanded by the Reformed churches; nor 4. to deny that the united churches at a later date have to judge the regulation of this issue.²⁵ In this decision, both the need for an church seminary and the need for scholarly study were emphasized within the Reformed churches in which Secession and *Doleantie* came together.

It took a while before the relationship between the united churches and the theological department at the Free University was official. A. Kuyper posited that a fundamental difference existed between a seminary and the theological department of a university. Even as late as 1912 he maintained a fundamental distinction between a seminary and a university. In his opinion, a seminary trains future ministers for the churches, but the Theological Department of the Free University should not demean itself to become a training institution for future ministers. It has to do that, too, but its first task is to present theology in a scholarly way.²⁶

Nevertheless, the Reformed Churches did supervise the theological teaching at the Free University. The deputies appointed to maintain the contact between the Reformed Churches and the Theological Department of the Free University stated that it was their mandate to evaluate:

- the appropriateness of the education as training for the ministry
- to be on guard against deviation from the Reformed Confession
- to evaluate whether there were weaknesses in the education
- to provide the faculty with an evaluation concerning an upcoming appointments

- to make known to the faculty comments or wishes concerning the theological students and their conduct

- to make sure that no one receives a doctor's degree in theology without having subscribed to the Form agreed to for that purpose.²⁷

In conclusion, the following can be noted. When the Reformed Church became independent from the state, it maintained the rule that the church itself should take care of the theological training of its ministers. When the churches of the Secession and the Doleantie came together, they acknowledged, in word and deed, the principle of the churches maintaining a theological training for preparing ministers of the Word. Kampen was maintained. Also, the important place of the churches in theological education was acknowledged by granting the Reformed Churches the authority to supervise the theological training at the Free University.

3. North American Developments

The two related principles that ministers teach ministers, and that the church takes care of this training were applied by the Reformed churches on this continent. To limit ourselves to the sister church of the Secession churches, the Christian Reformed Church maintained from the beginning the principle that the church is responsible for teaching its future ministers. At the February Classis of 1861, the question was discussed whether the churches should not open the way to training of young men to the ministry. The July Classis of 1863 entrusted that task to Rev. W. H. Van Leeuwen. Later, another minister, D. J. Van der Werp, trained students in addition to the work in his congregation. The first minister who was set aside for the training of the ministry was Rev. G. Boer, who was appointed in 1886 to teach students for the ministry.²⁸

When after World War II, the Canadian Reformed Churches were established, the matter of the training for the ministry was on the agenda of the very first General Synod of Homewood-Carman (1954) which appointed deputies "to be diligent concerning the whole matter of the training" (Art 88). Every subsequent general synod dealt with this matter. General Synod Orangeville (1968) established the Theological College and appointed the first professors. Synod also decided that:

to be admitted to the ecclesiastical examinations candidates shall submit proof that they have completed their studies at our own Theological College. Candidates who took their theological training at other institutions shall present a Certificate issued by the Staff of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches stating that they have followed and/or complemented a course of studies conforming with the training provided by the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches. (Art 171)

It can be noted that although Synod clearly expected future ministers to be trained at the school of the churches, it nevertheless left the door open for the possibility that a student study elsewhere. In that case, it was up to the College to evaluate such education and possibly request additional training at the Theological College. In practice this has meant an extra year of study at the Theological College prior to being admitted to the Classical examination.

4. **Conclusions**

On the basis of the above, the following can be concluded:

1. From the earliest records available, it is evident that the training of future ministers had an official ecclesiastical character. However, historical circumstances did not always allow the churches to assume their responsibility for this training since the civil government at times considered this training to be their task.
2. The churches of the Secession considered that the churches had the biblical duty to train future ministers themselves. This could not be left up to the civil authorities. This conviction led to the eventual establishment of the Theologische Hogeschool in Kampen. Even with the Union of 1892, the principle that the churches were responsible was maintained. Not only was the Theologische Hogeschool in Kampen maintained, but theological professors who were involved in training students for the ministry at the Free University were placed under the supervision of the Reformed Churches.
3. This heritage has had consequences for North America. It led to the establishing of Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids in the nineteenth century and the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the twentieth century.

¹ *Handelingen van de Synoden der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederlands in de 19 Zittingen door haar gehouden te Leeuwarden, van 18-29 Augustus 1891* (Leiden: Donner, 1891) Art 172.

²Published by J. H. Kok in Kampen in 1906.

³When he received the two letters addressed to him, he was labouring in the church at Ephesus. For 1 Timothy, see 1 Tim 1:3; for 2 Timothy the evidence is more indirect. When Paul suggests that Timothy come to him (2 Tim 4:9), he mentions that he is sending Tychius to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:12), presumably as Timothy's replacement. Also, he notes that Timothy will know the services rendered in Ephesus by Onesiphorus (2 Tim 1:18). See further, G. W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 10.

⁴So, e.g., Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 390; W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 246-247.

⁵See J. Van Andel, *Paulus' beide brieven aan Timotheus toegelicht* (Leiden: Donner, 1904), 148-149.

⁶Alfred Plummer, *The Pastoral Epistles* (The Expositor's Bible; 2nd ed.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889) 336 (emphasis is Plummer's). More recently, Knight, e.g., concurs with Plummer's observation. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 392.

⁷See, e.g., the discussion in I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 510-511.

⁸The phrase has also been rendered, e.g., "support and foundation of the truth" (F. W. Danker, rev. and ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature* [3rd ed., based on the 6th ed. of W. Bauer's *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 949) and "pillar and bulwark of the truth" (RSV).

⁹See Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 181; C. Bouma, *De Brieven van den Apostel Paulus aan Timotheus en Titus* (Kommentaar op het Nieuwe Testament XI; Amsterdam: Bottenburg, 1942), 145-146.

¹⁰Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 512.

¹¹Calvin, *Institutes* IV.i.10 (Battle's edition).

¹²Calvin on 1 Tim 3:15 in D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, eds., *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (T. A. Smail, trans.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), 232.

¹³There has always been a general acceptance of the fact that future ministers need to be trained and educated before they can be ordained. To be sure, some sixteenth century spiritualist groups were of the opinion that leaders of the congregation did not need any education, but this approach was an exception.

¹⁴ H. Bavinck, *Het doctorenambt* (Kampen: Zalsman, 1899), 20-21, 24-25.

¹⁵ H. Bavinck, *Het doctorenambt*, 27-34.

¹⁶ H. H. Kuyper, *De opleiding tot den dienst des woords bij de gereformeerden* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1891), 156, 431-432; E. K. Sturm, *Der junge Zacharias Ursinus* (Beiträge zur Geschichte und Lehre der Reformierten Kirche, 33; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 1972), 237-238.

¹⁷ See the decision of Dordrecht in F. L. Bos, *De Orde der Kerk* ('s-Gravenhage: Uitgeverij Guido de Bres, 1950) 79. See also the decision of Gorinchem 1622 on the same page.

¹⁸ D. Nauta, "Opleiding van predikanten", in F. W. Grosheide and G. P. van Itterzon, *Christelijke Encyclopedie* (6 vols, 2nd ed.; Kampen: Kok, 1956-1961) 1.318.

¹⁹ W. de Graaf, *Een monument der afscheiding* (Kampen: Kok, 1955) 5-6; H. Bouma, 'De voorgeschiedenis der opleiding', in *Tot de prediking van het woord des geloofs* (Kampen: Comité van Uitgave, 1953), 15.

²⁰ H. Bouma, 'De voorgeschiedenis', 21-26.

²¹ W. de Graaf, *Een monument der afscheiding*, 15-18.

²² H. Veltman, 'Zo God voor ons is', *Tot de prediking van het Woord des geloofs: Opstellen ter gelegenheid van de herdenking van de oprichting der Theologische School A.D. 1854 te Kampen* (Kampen: Comité van Uitgave, [1953]), 68; W. de Graaf, *Een monument der afscheiding*, 35-41.

²³ F. Vanden Berg, *Abraham Kuyper* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia, 1978), 97-99.

²⁴ *Handelingen van de Synode der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland in de 19 Zittingen door haar gehouden te Leeuwarden, van 18-29 Augustus 1891* (Leiden: Donner, 1891), Art. 172 (pp. 95-96); see also W. De Graaf, *Een monument der afscheiding*, 175.

²⁵ W. De Graaf, *Een monument der Afscheiding*, 177-178.

²⁶ J.C. Rullmann, *De Vrije Universiteit: Haar ontstaan en haar bestaan*, (Amsterdam: De Standaard, 1930) 110-111.

²⁷ *Acta der Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland gehouden te Utrecht van 22 Augustus tot 7 September 1905*, (Amsterdam: Höveker & Wormser, n.d.) 191.

²⁸ H. Beets, *De Chr. Geref. Kerk in N.A.: Zestig jaren van strijd en zegen* (Grand Rapids MI: Grand Rapids Printing Company, 1918) 147-151; see for further history of the training for the ministry, 206-212; 293-300.

The Theological Education Committee of the Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity of the Canadian Reformed Churches

April 2003

Appendix #4

Theological education in the United Reformed Churches

History, including recent history in Reformed denominations, has shown that denominational (i.e. synodical) supervision provides no guarantee that a seminary so controlled, can remain firmly loyal to the Scriptures and to the Reformed confessions. In fact, seminaries so controlled may very well be subject to the “political” forces that can appear in the life of any denomination. Seminaries that are free of such control are “free” to remain loyal to the confessions. Of course, no institution is free of its own history, its own reasons for starting, its support base among God’s people (the church!), and the “political” forces that operate within 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.

* * *

Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*

June 10, 2003

**C/O Rev. C. Bosch, Sec.,
505 Enfield Rd.,
Burlington, ON. L7T 2X5**

The Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity,

**C/O Rev. W. den Hollander,
154 Regent Street
Richmond Hill. ON L4C 9N9**

Esteemed Brothers;

Greetings! Enclosed please find our report to your committee as mandated by Synod Neerlandia, (Acts, Art. 73, Consid. 4.7). We trust you will include it in your report to Synod Chatham, 2004.

Over the past two years our committee has had two fruitful meetings with our URC counterparts. These meetings were held in a brotherly atmosphere of mutual trust. The results of these meeting are documented in our report.

We would like to draw the attention of your committee to the fact that aside from the Psalms and Hymns and the Church Order discussions, there may be areas that are not covered in our present discussions with the URC. These include the wording of the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity as well as the Liturgical Forms and prayers. We mention this as it appears that at some time more direction will need to be given re: these matters.

On behalf of the SCBP, and with
Greetings in our Lord,
On behalf of the SCBP
C. Bosch, sec.

**Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*
c/o 110 West 27th Street, Hamilton ON, L9C 5A1**

**Report to the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
(CPEU) Regarding the United Reformed Churches**

Esteemed Brothers:

In connection with moving to Phase 2 in our relationship with the URCNA, Synod Neerlandia 2001 directed the Committee, "to deal with the matter of the songbook." (Acts, Art. 73, 5.5) Synod considered that the Committee should

work closely with committees appointed by the URC Synod. These committees should report at regular intervals to the CPEU, which, in turn will produce a single comprehensive report, jointly with the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URC. (Acts, Art. 73, Consid.4.7)

In keeping with this mandate the Committee presents the following report.

1.0 Introduction:

The Committee held two joint meetings with the United Reformed Churches' Psalter Hymnal Committee, the first on March 15-16, 2002 in the Cornerstone URC of London, ON and the second on March 21 and 22, 2003 in the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church. The URC committee consists of nine members from various places both in Canada and the USA.

These meetings were held in a brotherly (and sisterly!) atmosphere and were excellent, productive meetings in which a number of things were accomplished.

The Press Releases of these meetings were published in both Clarion and Christian Renewal and the Minutes were exchanged.

2.0 March 15, 16, 2002 Meeting:

At this meeting, chaired by Rev. E. Knott of the URC, Rev. G.Ph. van Popta presented a report on the history of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Rev. D. Vander Meulen presented a report on the history of the URC Psalter Hymnal Committee and the mandates given that committee by URC Synods.

It was noted that while the URC committee was mandated "... to consider for inclusion..." the 150 Psalms in metrical settings from the Anglo-Genevan Psalter, our committee was mandated "...to include..." them. A positive and profitable discussion took place re. our respective mandates, history, and procedures.

As a result of the discussions the following was decided:

- a. That our committee formulate Principles for Song Selection for discussion and approval by both committees. Following such approval these will be submitted to the churches of each federation.
- b. That two members of the URC committee formulate a preface to these Principles for presentation and approval at the next meeting.
- c. That Minutes of each committee's meetings would be exchanged.

2.1. Mar. 21, 22, 2003 Meeting:

This meeting, chaired by Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, heard progress reports of the work done by the respective committees since March, 2003.

The URC committee recommended a suggested "Preface" to the "Principles and Guidelines for the Selection of Music in the Church." It also scrutinized the "Principles and Guidelines" for song selection as proposed by our committee. It will ask the URC Synod (2004) to relieve the committee of its responsibility for the prose section of the planned new URC Psalter Hymnal. Previously the committee decided to follow the divisions of the Apostles' Creed (Triune God, church, salvation, etc.) in compiling hymns deemed suitable for a new songbook.

Our committee reported on its activities. Besides dealing with copyright issues it formulated a set of Principles and Guidelines to govern the selection of hymns for a combined songbook. It also analyzed some hymns from the Psalter Hymnal, (1976 edition).

After extensive discussion, the "Preface, Principles and Guidelines" were unanimously adopted as follows:

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE SELECTION OF MUSIC IN THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Reformed Churches and United Reformed Churches entered into "Phase Two" of ecumenical relations, effective January 1, 2002, with the goal of eventual federative unity. The synods of those two federations mandated their respective committees to labor together to recommend to the churches a common songbook that would be faithful to the Scriptures and our Reformed confessions.

PREFACE

The Bible is filled with references to singing. From the very beginning God's people have responded to His grace, almighty power and presence with song. The songs of the Church are, essentially, prayers to God. They are filled with praise and thanksgiving, sorrow for sin and petition for forgiveness, and prayers for intercession in behalf of others in Christ. They also include instruction and exhortation. Thus the songs of the Church express the entire spectrum of the Christian's experience. While every believer may find personal expression of praise, thanksgiving, petitions, and repentance in song, and while we encourage the families of our churches to make use of the songbook in family devotions, the principle purpose for which this songbook is being developed is for congregational singing. The Psalms and hymns are being selected with the prayer that they may express and enrich our congregational worship of God.

Psalms 66:2 - "Sing out the honor of His name; make His praise glorious."
 Ephesians 5:19 - ". . . Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

PRINCIPLES:

THE SONG OF THE CHURCH IS TO BE SUITABLE FOR THE CHURCH'S WORSHIP TO THE GLORY OF GOD

1. The songs of the Church are to be scriptural

In content, form, and spirit the Church's songs must express the truth of the Holy Scriptures. Augustine, referring to the singing of Psalms, said, "No one can sing anything worthy of God which he has not received from Him . . . then we are assured that God puts the words in our mouth."

2. The songs of the Church are to be a sacrifice of praise[1]

Singing is an important element of the congregation's response to God's redeeming work in Christ Jesus and the Word proclaimed in the worship service.

John Calvin wrote, "Singing has great strength and power to move and to set on fire the hearts of men that they may call upon God and praise Him with a more vehement and more ardent zeal. This singing should not be light or frivolous, but it ought to have weight and majesty."

3. The songs of the Church are to be aesthetically pleasing

The songs for worship are to be a beautiful blend of God-honoring poetry and music.[2]

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING SONGS:

1. The songs of the Church must be thoroughly Biblical. They are to represent the full range of the revelation of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[3]
2. The Book of Psalms is foundational for the Church's songs. Therefore, all of these Psalms, in their entirety, ought to be included in the Church's songbook
3. When Psalms or other portions of Scripture are set to music, the words must be faithful to the content and form of the inspired text.[4]
4. In the case of songs other than the versification of Scripture, the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture [5] as summarized by our Reformed confessions.
5. The songs of the Church must be intelligible [6] and edifying to the body of Christ.[7]
6. The songs of the Church must reflect and preserve the language of the Church of all ages rather than accommodating current secular trends.[8]
7. In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from artificiality and sentimentality.
8. The music of the song should suit the text.
9. The music of the Church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Where possible, use is to be made of music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage (e.g., the Genevan psalm tunes and the Scottish Psalter).
10. The music of the Church should not be borrowed from music that suggests places and occasions other than the Church and the worship of God.[9]

11. The melodies and harmonies of church music must be suitable for congregational singing, avoiding complicated rhythms, excessive syncopation, and a wide range of pitch.

- 1) Hebrews 13:15
- 2) Psalm 92: 1-4
- 3) Psalm 147:1
- 4) 2 Timothy 3:16
- 5) Proverbs 30:6
- 6) 1 Corinthians 14:15
- 7) Colossians 3:16
- 8) Romans 12:2a
- 9) Ephesians 5:18-21

3.0 Future Direction:

At the March 21 – 22, 2003 meeting of our committee and that of the URC a discussion took place re: the course to take towards the goal of a common reformed songbook. We note the following:

- 3.1 The URC Psalter Hymnal Committee will propose to its next synod that initially both the Book of Praise as well as a Psalter Hymnal be recommended for use in the churches.
- 3.2 While the Psalter Hymnal Committee is mandated to produce a complete Psalter it is not bound to include the 150 Anglo-Genevan psalms. Our committee however is bound by its mandate to include them.

The combined committees decided to:

- 3.3 continue to work together, using the Principles and Guidelines to scrutinize and recommend suitable hymns.
- 3.4 be gracious, open and amenable to each other's point of view, remaining cognizant of each other's mandates while striving towards unanimity.
- 3.5 concentrate our efforts on the hymns
- 3.6 use the divisions of the Apostles' Creed (cf. # 2.1. above) as a general guide to organizing the hymns.

- 3.7 maintain close contact between our committees, reporting to each other on our progress re: hymns every other month starting May, 1, 2003.
- 3.8 hold our next combined meeting in Jenison, MI, in March, 2004.

In addition to this our committee decided:

- 3.9 In our contact with the URC Psalter Hymnal Committee we will restrict our discussion to the psalm and hymn sections of the proposed combined song book.

Respectfully Submitted;

Rev. D.G.J Agema

Rev. C. Bosch (secretary)

Prof. Dr. N.H Gootjes

C. J. Nobels (treasurer)

C. VanHalen-Faber

G. Ph. van Popta (chairman)