

**Committee on
Relations with Churches Abroad of the
Canadian Reformed Churches**

**Report to
General Synod Chatham, 2004**



**H.E. Hoogstra
J. Huijgen
E. Kampen
H. Leyenhorst
W. Pleiter
C.J. VanderVelde**

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COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD CHATHAM, 2004

Esteemed Brothers:

General Synod Neerlandia 2001 gave our Committee the mandate to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), and the Presbyterian Church in Korea under the adopted rules. This Report gives an account of the activities of the Committee since the last held Synod. The Churches are presented in alphabetical order. This is followed by the report on the International Conference of Reformed Churches. The Report concludes with some miscellaneous items.

1. Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

1.1. Mandate

Synod mandated the CRCA:

- 1.1.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) under the adopted rules while continuing to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter;
- 1.1.2. To remind the FCS of the rules for Fellowship which include, among other things, that churches in ecclesiastical fellowship be consulted before entering into third party relationships;
- 1.1.3. To inform both the FCS (Majority) and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) that they have our prayerful support with the hope that they will, by God's grace, come to reconciliation;
- 1.1.4. To communicate to the churches the need for prayerful support for the situation of the Church in Scotland;
- 1.1.5. To continue the discussion on the existing differences in confession and church polity as noted in Consideration 4.6.3. (Synod 2001, Article 34).

1.2. Correspondence

- 1.2.1. An email was sent to the Principal Clerk of the FCS on July 3, 2001, which requested further information about the division that occurred in January 2000.
- 1.2.2. A letter dated September 10, 2001 was sent to the Principal Clerk of the FCS reiterating the request for information. In this same letter mention was made of how they had entered into fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of North

America without consulting us on the matter. The letter also mentioned the continued prayerful support for the churches of the Lord in Scotland.

- 1.2.3. Via the Corresponding Secretary of the ICRC we received a communication dated October 26, 2001, in which the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the FCS distanced itself from an article written by Principal Donald Macleod in the West Highland Free Press on 27th July 2001. This article contained derogatory remarks about the churches involved in the ICRC.
- 1.2.4. On November 2, 2001, a copy of the Acts and a copy of the 2001 Yearbook were mailed to the FCS.
- 1.2.5. On December 4, 2001, a copy of the Study Reports on the divergences between Reformed and Presbyterian Confessions and Polity was sent, soliciting feedback on these studies.
- 1.2.6. An email dated April 4, 2002 was received from the Clerk to the Ecumenical Relations Committee responding to our letters. Appreciation was expressed for our ongoing concern and prayers. The letter explained that it was not possible to go into details about the situation with the FCC since the FCC had initiated legal actions. Finally, they acknowledge our point regarding entering fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of North America and wished to assure us that no offense was intended.
- 1.2.7. An invitation was received dated April 4, 2002 to send delegates to the forthcoming General Assembly. Two brothers were delegated to visit Scotland, although it was not possible to coordinate their visit to coincide with the date of the General Assembly.
- 1.2.8. In a letter dated June 25, 2002 we communicated our evaluation of the situation based on all information gathered, including the report by the two brothers who visited Scotland in May 2002.
- 1.2.9. In a letter dated February 21, 2003, we were invited to send a delegate to the General Assembly scheduled for May 19-23, 2003. We also received a Statement of the Ecumenical Relations Committee concerning the Free Church of Scotland Continuing. A letter of greeting was sent in response, dated March 7, 2003.

1.3. Acts of General Assemblies

The Principal Acts of the General Assemblies of the Free Church of Scotland of 2001 and 2002 were reviewed. They reveal that the Assemblies continue to be busy with matters of the training of the ministry, mission, ecumenical relations, practical matters pertaining to property issues, as well as legal challenges from the FCC.

1.4. Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

- 1.4.1. In a letter dated December 4, 2001, we informed the FCC via the Clerk of the Assembly of our efforts to monitor developments. Included with the letter was a copy of the Acts of Synod 2001.
- 1.4.2. In a letter dated February 16, 2002, the Clerk of the Ecumenical Relations Committee pointed out areas he deemed worthy of further consideration on our part. This letter was later approved by the FCC General Assembly of May 28, 2002.
- 1.4.3. In a letter dated June 25, 2002, we communicated our evaluation of the situation based on all information gathered, including the report by the two brothers who visited Scotland in May 2002.

1.5. The Division within the Free Church

The Correspondence indicates that effort was made to come to greater clarity on the division that occurred in January 2000. Besides corresponding about the matter, information was gathered via contacts at the ICRC in Philadelphia in June 2001 and the visit of two brothers to Scotland in May 2002.

The correspondence did not bring any new things to light. No new documents beyond what was already known to us were submitted. The letter from the FCC dated February 16, 2002, tried to point out some areas deemed worthy of further consideration on our part. However, we were not convinced that those who formed the FCC had truly exhausted the ecclesiastical process.

At the ICRC meeting in Philadelphia we became aware of extensive efforts by a delegation from the OPC, which had visited Scotland, to bring about reconciliation. What is most relevant is the way the OPC Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations said, "...it does not believe an error by an assembly in the determining of a judicial matter not involving heresy is an adequate ground for disrupting the unity of the church." This corresponds to the conclusion of the CRCA as stated in the Report to Synod Neerlandia (see 3.4.5 and 3.4.6.).

The visit to Scotland in May 2002 brought no new information to the fore. It should be noted that the delegates were warmly received by both sides and felt spiritual affinity with both. This impressed on their minds that the issue was one of struggle between brothers, not a matter of true or false church. A visitor from Canada might not be able to discern a difference between a FCS and FCC worship service. All this makes the separation even more regrettable.

To help Synod arrive at a proper conclusion about the matter, we

include portions of the letters sent to both the FCS and the FCC that summed up our findings. To the Free Church of Scotland we wrote:

...In light of the report brought back by our two brothers, we wish to reassure your Committee of the continuing relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship between our respective churches (see Acts Synod Neerlandia, Article 34, 5.1.1, p 33). Further, while we can understand that it must be burdensome to have to talk about the separation that occurred in January of 2000, we wish to assure your Committee that we talk about this because we wish to take our relationship seriously. By freely entering into relationships with churches in other parts of the world we make ourselves accountable to each other (see Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, especially # 1). Please be assured then that what we say is not done out of haughtiness but out of a sense of exercising our Christian obligations toward the Free Church, motivated by the love for Christ.

In all this, however, we must acknowledge that from our perspective, we are not able to come to any different conclusion than the one found in our Report to Synod Neerlandia 2001. As you have a copy of that Report you will be aware that we did not simply give an endorsement to the actions taken but we had our reservations and concerns. From our perspective, we still wonder if all was done to prevent the separation. You may know that we have communicated to the "Continuing" side that our conclusions with respect to their actions remain the same as well. Though we disagree with the course of action they followed, we have a degree of sympathy for their plight.

We draw your attention to the words of the apostle Paul as found in 1 Corinthians 9. It is a familiar passage of Scripture dealing with our Christian rights and freedoms. In chapter 9 Paul makes the point that he had certain rights but he did not insist on them. He did that both for the sake of the hearers and for himself. He wanted to win as many as possible. He was also acutely aware that his own share in the blessings were at stake (v 23). He did not want to be disqualified for the prize (v. 27). We wonder: you may have been in the right about certain things, but was it the proper time to assert that right? Was it worth the cost of the breaking of the Church of the Lord in Scotland?

We recognize we look at it from a distance. That can be a

disadvantage but it can also be an advantage as sometimes in the heat of the battle we lose perspective. We are sure that the desire of us both is the glory of God's Name. It is that desire which makes us bold to humbly write these words to you in the hope that they may bring glory to God's Name in encouraging restoration of what has been broken.

To the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) we wrote,

...In all this, however, we must acknowledge that from our perspective, we are not able to come to any different conclusion than the one found in our Report to Synod Neerlandia 2001. As you have a copy of that Report you will be aware that we did not simply give an endorsement to the actions taken by what you term as the FCS-Majority but we had our reservations and concerns. In article 28 of our Belgic Confession we confess that we are obliged to maintain the unity of the church. Perhaps with our continental Reformed polity we are not able to grasp all the intricacies of the Presbyterian polity. We know you have tried to point some of these things out to us in your letter of February 16, 2002. From our point of view, it would appear that you did not exhaust the ecclesiastical process. More significantly, however, it would seem that a separation over a point of church polity is not justified. From our vantage point that point of polity is not the sequence of events that led to actions in January 2000 but the decision made some years previously that the matter should be considered finished. In terms of polity, one should be willing to suffer an injustice. Separation requires evidence that the Scriptures, as confessed in the Standards, are being denied. Are you able to defend your course of action in light of Scripture as summed up in your Standards?

We write these things with trepidation, all the more because we sense our spiritual affinity with you. We want you to know that we will also address the brothers from whom you have become separated. We do not single you out as the only one with fault. We write these things, however, in light of the relationship that we have with the Free Church of Scotland since 1992 with the prayer that our words spoken and written in weakness may have the blessed effect of restoration of a house divided.

The further investigation of the matter has thus led to a confirmation of the position found in the Report to Synod 2001. That means when all is said and done and empathy is expressed for the FCC,

we must add our agreement to the words of the OPC Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations that we too do "...not believe an error by an assembly in the determining of a judicial matter not involving heresy is an adequate ground for disrupting the unity of the church." In all this it should also be remembered that the FCS claims it followed due process and thus contests the charge of having made an error. We have no ground to dispute that claim.

1.6. The Discussion of the Divergences

To fulfill Synod Neerlandia's mandate "to continue the discussion on the existing divergences in confession and church polity..." the Study Reports on the Divergences between Presbyterian and Reformed Confessions and Church Polity as submitted to Synod New Westminster 1971 and Synod Burlington 1983 were gathered and sent to the FCS (see Correspondence 1.2.5). To date, there have been no comments on these studies.

The Committee does deem it fitting to draw Synod's attention to what is found in Appendix I of Synod Lincoln, 1992. This is a significant reference since Synod Lincoln formalized Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS. In a section of the CRCA Report with the heading, "Relations with the OPC" it says,

In light of the fact that the Canadian Reformed Churches have for some years already been busy with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and seeing that it is the only church of Presbyterian persuasion that we have had intense contact with, we decided as Canadian Deputies to bring the members of the FCS up to date on the nature and state of these discussions. In particular we dealt with what have become known as the divergencies between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards, between the polity of Dordt and Westminster.

We fully realize that while there are similarities between the FCS and the OPC, there are also differences that need to be noted and respected. And while it can be argued that we did not have a mandate from Synod 1986 to 1989 to discuss these matters, we were of the opinion that failure to do so may well deprive the FCS of certain needed insights in terms of their evaluation of us and where we stand with respect to their confessions and church government.

They listened sympathetically and requested us to send them copies of the letter which our Contact Committee sent to the OPC. We promised to do so in due time. It may be worthy of note that one of the Scottish brothers asked, "Why do you speak of us as Presbyterian and yourself as Reformed; whereas, we consider ourselves to be Reformed as well." We were a little taken aback by this question and

explained that no offense was intended, but that it had become, rightly or wrongly, a way of speaking and easy identification in our circles. It became clear that the FCS considers itself to be Reformed in doctrine and Presbyterian in polity. (Can the same not be said of us?) (Acts Synod Lincoln, 1992, pages 123-124)

When Synod Neerlandia mandated the Committee to continue the discussion, it implied that this discussion originally existed but had come to a standstill. Synod Lincoln 1992 was informed that the FCS knew about the divergences yet made no point of mandating these as a point for discussion. While Synod Neerlandia may have felt the need to be consistent in its approach to the FCS and OPC, in effect it brought a new element into our dealings with the FCS. The effort to be consistent in terms of the OPC has resulted in an inconsistency in terms of the relationship with the FCS. It brings into this relationship something that is foreign to it.

1.7. Recommendations

The Committee recommends that Synod decide:

- 1.7.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the FCS under the adopted rules;
- 1.7.2. To endorse the evaluation of the Committee regarding the division which occurred in January 2000 and consider the matter to have been investigated sufficiently and therefore not to continue contact with the Free Church Continuing;
- 1.7.3. To rescind the mandate regarding the discussion of divergences.

2. Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA).

2.1. Mandate

Synod mandated the CRCA:

- 2.1.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the FRCA under the adopted rules;
- 2.1.2. To express appreciation to the FRCA for their continued support of the Theological College;
- 2.1.3. To express gratitude that the FRCA remained faithful to the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions in the face of their recent struggles (Acts 2001, Article 34).

2.2. Correspondence

- 2.2.1. In August 2001 a copy of the Acts of the FRCA Synod held in the year 2000 was received.
- 2.2.2. On November 2, 2001, a copy of the Acts of Synod Neerlandia was mailed out.
- 2.2.3. An invitation was received to send a delegate to the upcoming Synod, scheduled to be held in Rockingham, starting July 7,

2003. Br. W. Pleiter was appointed to represent the churches, if possible, during his upcoming visit to Australia.

2.3. Acts of Synod Albany 2000.

This Synod convened in Albany, Western Australia from July 3rd–13th. The following is an overview of the decisions of this Synod, in which it is clear that the FRCA strives to maintain a biblical view to justice, ecclesiastical relations and to the well being of their federation

- 2.3.1. Synod examined the sermon proposal for Dr. B A Zuiddam upon the request of the church at Launceston. After examination, the sermon proposal was found to be satisfactory and the call extended to Candidate B.A. Zuiddam by the church at Launceston was approved. (Articles 11 –14)
- 2.3.2. Synod decided to continue its financial support of the Theological College and the Australian theological students. Arrangements are to be made for a guest lecturer from Hamilton to teach in Australia. Synod also decided to continue investigation of the long-term possibility of setting up theological training in Australia, including the possibility of starting a theological library. (Article 25)
- 2.3.3. A request was made to add to the Australian Church Order a new article with the title: Indigenous Missionary Ministers of the Word. This relates to missionary work undertaken in India under the guidance of the church at Mt. Nasura.". Rather than change the Church Order, Synod decided to make an addition to the adopted guidelines of Synod 1970. (Article 55)
- 2.3.4. Synod acceded to the request for deputies to be appointed to look into the possibility of having an edition of the Book of Praise specifically printed for the Australian Churches. (Article 54)
- 2.3.5. Synod dealt with the ramifications of the previous Synod's findings regarding the teachings of Rev. VanHulst, (which ultimately led to his dismissal as minister of the church in Launceston). The appeals were not against the actual findings of Synod 98, but rather they were seeking clarity on the issues surrounding the controversy and disagreement on how the Synod decisions could be interpreted. (Article 51, 61)
- 2.3.6. The desire to deal with appeals and discipline matters in a just manner is evident in Synod's decision to adopt a proposal for "a two stage appeal process (Classis and Synod)." Since classis is scheduled to convene at least once every six months Article 41 of the Church Order was changed to incorporate this revision. (Article 43)
- 2.3.7. Synod decided to maintain its Sister Church Relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA), Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK), Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) on the basis that each gives evidence that

it is "faithful to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order." (Art.31,32,33,87).

2.3.8. Synod decided the following in regards to the Indonesian Churches:

2.3.8.1. Gereja-Gereja Refomasi Indonesia (GGRI)

Synod decided to continue its sister-relations with the GGRI with a view to support them in "well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the Reformed character of these churches." Synod finds that the GGRI give evidence of continuing "faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order." (Article 46)

2.3.8.2. Gereja-Gereja Musyafir Refomasi (GGMR)

Synod considered that the GGMR "needs to be stabilized before recommendations regarding sister church relationships can be considered." (Article 49)

2.3.8.3. Synod decided the following in regards to Interchurch relations;

2.3.8.3.1. Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)

Synod decided to mandate its deputies to "convey to the PCEA our disappointment that they did not interact with the statements accepted by Launceston 1998," and to "ascertain whether there is still a willingness with the PCEA to discuss these statements on the basis of Scripture and our mutual confessions." Synod mentioned that it would be better for these discussions to be done "via face to face meetings" and based on the PCEA's final response to come with recommendations to the next Synod. (Article 64)

2.3.8.3.2. Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

Synod expressed its desire to move into a sister-relationships with the RCNZ. However, it decided "to postpone the implementation of this decision until the next Synod." (Article 93)

2.3.9. As to the relations with the Free Church of Scotland; Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland; Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland Synod mandated its deputies "to study/discuss the outstanding areas of concern with FCS, EPCI and RPCI." The areas of concern centre on how, in a manageable and responsible way, the FRCA can fulfill its obligations towards these churches that are so geographically and culturally distant. (Article 73)

2.3.10. The Acts of Synod 2000 also contained the Acts of the Extraordinary Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, held in Albany on March 1&2, 2000. These Acts deal primarily with the preemptory examination of candidate B.A. Zuiddam.

2.4. Considerations

- 2.4.1. From the general correspondence and the Acts of Synod Albany, we may conclude that the FRCA continue to be faithful to the Word of God, the Reformed confessions and the adopted Church Order.
- 2.4.2. It is reason for much thankfulness that the FRCA, in various ways, continue to be major supporters of the Theological College in Hamilton.

2.5. Recommendations

The Committee recommends that Synod decide:

- 2.5.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the FRCA under the adopted rules;
- 2.5.2. To express appreciation to the FRCA for their continued support of the Theological College.

3. Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)

3.1. Mandate

Synod mandated the CRCA:

- 3.1.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the FRCSA under the adopted rules;
- 3.1.2. To request the CRCA to convey our commendations to the FRCSA in regards to what is mentioned under 3 (Synod 2001, Art.35).

3.2. Correspondence

- 3.2.1. On Nov. 2, 2001, a letter was sent communicating the decisions of Synod Neerlandia with respect to the FRCSA. Also, a copy of the Acts of Synod Neerlandia was mailed out.
- 3.2.2. In an email, dated Mar.8, 2002, we received an invitation to attend the next Synod of the FRCSA, scheduled for Apr. 30 - May 3, 2002. On Apr. 23, 2002, a letter of greeting was sent.
- 3.2.3. Two copies of the Acts of the Ad-hoc Synod of Johannesburg 2001 and Synod Johannesburg 2002 were received in the Fall of 2002. No English summary had been included.
- 3.2.4. In Feb. 2003, we obtained an English Summary of the Acts of Synod Bethal 2000. No official Acts of this Synod were ever received.

3.3. Highlights from the Acts

- 3.3.1. Constitution: Synods were held every two years, Bethal in 2000 (Synod B) and Johannesburg in 2002 (Synod J). An Ad-hoc Synod was convened in 2001. Three delegates of each church as well as advisers (missionaries and representatives from sister churches) were seated as members of the synods.
- 3.3.2. Examinations: Synod B examined a candidate and a minister of another denomination and declared them eligible for call.

The Ad-hoc Synod Johannesburg (2001) considered the request and reasons of the Church of Springs, and accepted this congregation into the federation. Its minister was examined and admitted also. Synod J examined the first student of its own Theological College and two indigenous candidates (in English, Tswana and North Sotho). All three were declared eligible for call.

- 3.3.3. **Institution of Classes:** Synod J adopted the proposal to divide the federation into two classes. Each classis would need to meet once every half year. Appeals against a classical decision should be directed to the other classis. Each classis would delegate three ministers and three elders to synod. All ministers not delegated to synod would be invited to serve as advisers. From now on, synod would be convened once every three years.
- 3.3.4. **Contact with Churches Abroad:** Synods B and J decided to maintain fraternal relations with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Canadian/American Reformed Churches, the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland and the Free Church of Scotland. Synod B revoked the sister-church relations with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia and the Presbyterian Churches of Korea. Membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) would be continued. Their meetings would also serve to gather information about Reformed churches outside the FRCSA's focus area.
- 3.3.5. **Contacts with National and African Churches:** Contact with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA) would be continued. Discussion was to focus on Bible criticism, church discipline and contact with the Nederduits Reformed Churches (NGK). Synod J delegated a representative to Synod Zuidhorn of the Dutch sister-churches (GKN) to inform the GKN of the FRCSA's objections to establish sister-church relations with this denomination. (The GKN ignored this request and warning.)
They also charged their deputies to focus their attention on a number of churches, e.g. Calvin Protestant Churches (Synod B), the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, especially Nkhoma Synod, the African Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Church in East Africa, both in Kenya, and the Church of Christ in Sudan (Synod J).
- 3.3.6. **Contact with Concerned Churches in South Africa:** Synod B charged the consistories to follow up on the many pockets of concerned church members of other denominations, identified in an extensive report. Gratitude was expressed to the Australian churches (FRCA) for their financial commitment to assist in the work among the "disenchanted" as they call the concerned.

- 3.3.7. Liturgy: Synod B adopted an overture to delay the introduction of hymns and spiritual songs until better grounds for such action would be presented. Synod J was served with such a report, adopted its recommendations and charged the deputies to design the parameters for their use and submit these to the churches for consideration well before the next synod.
- 3.3.8. Mission: A rather informative discussion took place during Synod Johannesburg about sending churches and those being established, independent and dependent congregations ("sendende kerke & sendingsgemeentes") Synod J adopted a number of steps to assist the latter in receiving the help to become familiar with the procedures for ecclesiastical meetings at all levels. Upon institution, a church would be an independent member of the federation, even though financially it still might have to rely on the support of others. Five missionaries attended Synod J as advisers, an indication of how much work is done among the black, coloured and white population. Requests would soon be forthcoming for institution from culturally very divergent congregations, of the Afrikaner-speaking Belhar area and the Sotho-language groups in Mamelodi and Soshanguve-North. Some individuals from an English-speaking church also sought support. Synod recognized that these matters would have future implications for the federative unity, theological training, the liturgy, the Church Order, and the language spoken at meetings among others. Meanwhile the work would go on unabated, thanks to the financial support of various northern Dutch sister-churches, which take care of approximately 95% of the Mission budget.
- 3.3.9. Theological Training: The FRCSA established its own Theological College per Jan. 1, 1998. It offers a well-rounded academic program, which includes proficiency in Hebrew and Greek. Synod J decided to locate the College in Pretoria, and charge the Board of Governors to seek government accreditation. In 1994, the FRCSA allowed students interested in becoming missionaries or mission workers to study at the Mukhanyo Theological College, an institution governed by representatives of various churches including the FRCSA. The education at this College is a combination of academic, theoretical and practical training, given in English; the government recognizes its degrees and certificates. For FRCSA students, an additional year was added, the Mukhanyo-Plus level, for studies of the Reformed Confessions, the Church Order and Church History. Synod J charged the Board of Governors to work towards combining the two options of training to promote unity in

doctrine and training. A final resolution will be considered when the soon-to-be-instituted Sotho-language churches can be part of the decision-making.

- 3.3.10. Next Synod: The Church of Pretoria-Maranata was appointed the convening church for Synod 2005, likely to be in April/May. The FRCSA will also host the next conference of the ICRC in 2005; the date and exact location have not been decided.

3.4. Observations

- 3.4.1. It is evident from the correspondence, Acts of Synod and the various Reports to Synod that the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa desire to live according to the Word of God, the adopted Confessions and the Church Order.
- 3.4.2. It should be noted that the Lord is blessing the faithfulness of the FRCSA members. A few churches and an even larger number of ministers have sought admission to the federation over the last few years.
- 3.4.3. It is amazing that the FRCSA has as many missionaries in the field as they have Ministers serving congregations. This is made possible through the generous support of some Dutch churches (GKN), while the Australian churches (FRCA) assist financially with the work among the concerned members of other congregations.
- 3.4.4. The federative unity of the FRCSA will certainly experience its challenges in the future, as it seeks to accommodate people of different cultures and languages. Synod J was well aware of this and demonstrated its reliance on the Lord by focusing on God in charging its deputies with various tasks, e.g. Theological Training, Mission and others to bolster its desire to preserve unity in diversity.

3.5. Recommendations

The Committee recommends that Synod decide:

- 3.5.1. To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa under the adopted rules;
- 3.5.2. To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of financial assistance to aid them with their extensive mission work and labours among the concerned;
- 3.5.3. To invite the Board of Governors of our Theological College to seek ways and means to offer assistance to the FRCSA by the Canadian/American Reformed Churches for the Theological Training, such as extending academic support through guest lectures and the like by the faculty of our College in Hamilton, Ontario.

4. Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK).

4.1. Mandate

Synod mandated the CRCA:

- 4.1.1. To seek contact with the PCK delegates who are attending the ICRC in Philadelphia with a view to opening the lines of communication;
- 4.1.2. To discuss the questions concerning the fencing of the Lord's supper and confessional membership;
- 4.1.3. To await and, where feasible, make use of opportunities to discuss the existing differences in confession and church polity as noted in Consideration 4.5;
- 4.1.4. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with PCK under the adopted rules;
- 4.1.5. Not to follow at this time the recommendations of the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer and Willoughby Heights regarding discontinuing or considering a discontinuation of contact with the PCK, but to communicate to the PCK that a lack of communication is preventing a meaningful relationship (Synod 2001, Article 36).

4.2. Issues Mandated by Synod

- 4.2.1. Contact was made with the delegates of the PCK to the ICRC and formal meetings were held in which new communication channels were opened. The current General Secretary, Dr. Ho Jin Jun, has also been very supportive in communicating.
- 4.2.2. The committee communicated with the PCK concerning the Lord's Supper, confessional membership and differences in confessions and church polity. We received a copy of Chapter 58 of the Book of Church Order dealing with the administration of Lord's Supper (see Correspondence). It is true that the PCK has a more open practice regarding the Lord's Supper than we do. A minister may "invite all those who profess the true religion, and are communicants in good standing in any evangelical church, to participate in the ordinance" (58-4). However, this must be seen within the context of the whole section pertaining to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The section as a whole indicates that they take the holiness of the table seriously. They will not admit "the ignorant and the scandalous." Further, the people undergo a time of spiritual preparation before the celebration (see sections 58-2,3). With respect to confessional membership, young people and new members are required to publicly profess their faith in Christ before they are admitted.

When we reviewed all the information gathered over the years about the PCK, we concluded that this was not something previously unknown. In the Committee Report to Synod 1983, it was stated that the PCK form of government is

in line with "classic Presbyterian Form of Government. It differs not at all from the principles of Presbyterian church government as found with the OPC, the Free Church at Scotland, and so on" (Acts 1983, 320).

- 4.2.3. With respect to the "Divergences," a copy of the Study reports submitted to past Synods was sent and response was solicited. The General Secretary acknowledged receipt and the fact those differences existed. He pointed out that the situation of the churches in the Third World is quite different from that in the West as they are surrounded by false religion and culture. While another effort was made to solicit specific responses, no further communication has been received on the matter.

While as Committee we strove to fulfill the mandate given by Synod Neerlandia, the points raised regarding this matter in the section on the Free Church of Scotland also come into play here (see 1.6). In effect, a new element is brought into the relationship with the PCK.

4.3. Correspondence

- 4.3.1. A letter was received, dated July 10, 2002, in which an apology was offered for the lack of communication. A booklet was included entitled "The Presbyterian Church in Korea."
- 4.3.2. A letter was received, dated August 8, 2001, inviting us to send a delegate to the 51st General Assembly. A letter of greeting was sent on September 10, 2001.
- 4.3.3. On September 10, 2001, a letter was sent seeking some more information about the way the confessions are taught in the PCK and how much the members are aware of the contents of the confessions. Some further information was sought about the way the elders supervise the Lord's Supper, since the members receive it in the pews.
- 4.3.4. On November 2, 2001, a copy of the Acts of Synod Neerlandia was mailed out.
- 4.3.5. On December 4, 2001, a copy of the Study Reports on the divergences between the Presbyterian and Reformed confessions and polity was sent out with the request for any feedback they might have.
- 4.3.6. In an email dated January 1, 2002, we received a New Year's greeting and thank-you for the Acts. It was considered regrettable that the last Synod seriously discussed cutting relations with the PCK. They are eager to come and visit a future Synod. With respect to the divergences, this was acknowledged. It was pointed out that the situation of the churches in the Third World is quite different from that in the West as they are surrounded by false religion and culture. With respect to the fencing of the Lord's Supper, they are open to every baptized Christian regardless of denomination

and confession. Catechetical teaching varies from church to church.

- 4.3.7. We received a letter dated February 8, 2002, inviting us to send a delegate to the upcoming 50th Anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin). Travel and accommodation costs would be covered by the PCK.
- 4.3.8. In a letter dated March 5, 2002, we acknowledged previous communications. We made some further inquiries about the celebration of the Lord's Supper (Frequency; Forms; Verbal Warning; Public Profession by Youth). A copy of their Form of Government in English was also requested.
- 4.3.9. In an email dated April 24, 2002 we informed them that br. Harold Leyenhorst had been appointed to visit them in September 2002.
- 4.3.10. On May 24, 2002 a copy of the Form of Government dealing with the administration of the Lord's Supper was received. With respect to admission to the Lord's Table, it says,

58-1 The Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is to be observed frequently; the stated times to be determined by the Session of each congregation, as it may judge most edification.

58-2 The ignorant and scandalous are not to be admitted to the Lord's supper.

58-3 It is proper that the public notice should be given to the congregation, at least the Sabbath before the administration of this ordinance, and that either then, or on some day of the week, the people be instructed in its nature, and a due preparation for it, that all may come in a suitable manner to this holy feast.

58-4 On the day of the observance of the Lord's Supper, when the sermon is ended, the Minister shall show,

That this is an ordinance of Christ; by reading the words of institution either from one of the evangelists, or from 1 Corinthians xi., which, as to him may appear expedient, he may explain and apply; that it is to be observed in remembrance of Christ, to show forth his death till he come; that it is of inestimable benefit, to strengthen his people against sin; to support them under troubles; to encourage and quicken them in duty; to inspire them with love and zeal; to increase their faith, and holy resolution; and to beget peace of conscience, and comfortable hopes of eternal life.

Since, by our Lord's appointment, this sacrament sets forth the communion of saints, the Minister, at the discretion of the Session, before the observance begins, may either invite all those who profess the true religion, and are communicants in good standing in any evangelical

church, to participate in the ordinance; or may invite those who have been approved by the Session, after having given indication of their desire to participate. It is proper also to give a special invitation to non-communicants to remain during the service.

- 4.3.11 An email was sent on March 6, 2003, requesting a summary of the most recent General Assembly as well as soliciting comments on the study reports regarding the divergences. No response was received at the time of finalizing this report.

4.4. Visit to Presbyterian Church of Korea

4.4.1. Upon invitation, Harold Leyenhorst visited the PCK and their 52nd General Assembly in September 2002. There was a special Jubilee Celebration at the General Assembly to which all the churches the PCK maintains contact with were invited. There were also several formal and informal meetings with Dr. Jun, professors of the Theological College and elders and ministers who could speak English. During this visit, Rev. Ahn, a missionary of the PCK to Mongolia who had been on sabbatical in 2001/2002 in the Fraser Valley, served as unofficial tour guide, which was extremely helpful. The visit was very beneficial in establishing contacts and for gaining a better understanding of our sister church in Korea.

4.4.2. The PCK is undergoing rapid growth and has an aggressive mission policy. They currently have 400,000 members and expect a 50% growth in the next six years. The process of growth can result in change and we were urged to maintain contact with the PCK to support them in remaining reformed.

4.4.3. It was learned that the churches do not always issue attestations when members move from church to church. The General Secretary has communicated to the churches that they should issue membership attestations.

4.4.4. Young people do public profession of faith around the age of fifteen after examination by the minister and elders. They must profess a belief in Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the church.

4.5. Recommendations

The Committee recommends that Synod decide:

4.5.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the PCK under the adopted rules;

4.5.2. To conclude that the information gathered concerning the fencing of the Lord's supper and confessional membership is not different from what was known when Ecclesiastical Fellowship was established;

4.5.3. To rescind the mandate regarding the discussion of divergences;

4.5.4. To continue to strengthen communication with the PCK and as best as possible monitor the growth and trends in the PKC.

5. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKN – Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland)

5.1. Mandate

With respect to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Synod decided:

5.1.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN under the adopted rules;

5.1.2. To instruct the CRCA:

5.1.2.1. To stay in touch with the deputies of the GKN concerning the relationship with the OPC in light of Rule 3 of ecclesiastical fellowship;

5.1.2.2. To study the Form for the Solemnization for Marriage of Synod Leusden, to discuss the changes with the deputies of the GKN, and to report to the next Synod whether this new Form does indeed diminish or weaken the Scriptural teaching about marriage;

5.1.2.3. To make more thorough study of the concerns mentioned in its Report to determine whether the CanRC should approach the sister churches in The Netherlands in accordance with Rule 1 of the rules for ecclesiastical fellowship with the warning that they are deviating from their Reformed basis in the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity;

5.1.2.4. To express to the GKN the disappointment that the CanRC were not informed that a major change to the Church Order was considered when revisions were prepared in the manner of ecclesiastical examinations;

5.1.2.5. To pass on consideration 4.11 above to the GKN in light of Synod Leusden's decision regarding the administration of the Lord's supper by army chaplains (Synod 2001, Article 80).

5.2. Issues Mandated by Synod

5.2.1. Marriage Form

In response to the mandate to study the Marriage Form and to discuss it with the Dutch deputies, the following document was prepared and sent to the Dutch deputies to serve as a basis for discussion:

Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – Marriage Form

Until Synod Leusden 1999, the Marriage Form (MF) drafted by Synod Arnhem 1981 was in use. Synod Berkel en Rodenrijs

1996 drafted another MF, with the result that from 1996 until 1999 two MFs were in use. Synod Leusden 1999 withdrew both of these and approved a new MF (*Acta*, art. 52, decision 2.2). We will compare the 1999 MF with the 1981 MF.

There are noticeable differences in two areas: male headship in marriage and having children.

Male headship/Female submission

There has been a shift pertaining to the thinking about male headship in marriage. While the 1981 MF made explicit reference to the "authority" ("gezag") of the husband, this word is nowhere found in the 1999 MF. On the floor of Synod, the explanation was given that the term "authority" is experienced as a negative term in today's society (*Acta*, art. 52, p. 114). Moreover, the 1981 address to the bride, "Bride, love your husband, *accept obediently his leading and follow him*, as the congregation lets itself be led by Christ" ["Bruid, heb uw man lief, *aanvaard gehoorzaam zijn leiding en volg hem*, zoals de gemeente zich door Christus laat leiden"], has been changed to: "Bride, love your husband and help him by seeking the good for him in everything. *Accept him as head and receive his loving care as the security which Christ gives you*" ["Bruid, heb uw man lief en help hem door in alles het goede voor hem to zoeken. *Aanvaard hem als hoofd en ontvang zijn liefdevolle zorg als geborgenheid die Christus u geeft*] (*Acta*, art. 52, p. 112). The husband, as head, is now seen in the first place as a protector rather than someone invested with authority over his wife.

This does not mean that there is nothing left of the husband's authority. The bridegroom's vow in the 1999 MF does ask, "Do you promise to *lead her* in all things that are according to God's will" ["Beloof u haar *voor te gaan* in alle dingen die naar Gods wil zijn?"] (*Acta*, art. 52, p. 112)? Moreover, the bride's vow in the 1999 MF asks, "Do you promise to help him and to *follow him* in all things that are according to God's will" ["Beloof u hem te helpen en hem te *volgen* in alle dingen die naar Gods wil zijn?"] (*Acta*, art. 52, p. 112)?

There is also a new paragraph about the mutual respect which husband and wife ought to have for each other. Husband and wife have been given to each other "to complement each other and to *serve each other* and not to domineer over each other" ["...om *elkaar* aan te vullen en *te dienen*, niet om elkaar te overheersen."] Both have been created in God's image, both are heirs of eternal life. "All this requires *mutual respect* in marriage,

¹Here the English may have a slightly stronger nuance than the Dutch, but we could not find a better English idiomatic expression.

whereby loving faithfulness sets the tone” [“Dit alles vraagt in het huwelijk om *wederzijds respect*, waarbij de liefdevolle trouw de toon aangeeft” (*Acta*, art. 52, p. 111)]. Considering that explicit reference to authority has been dropped in the 1999 MF, and male headship is seen in the first place as a protecting and nurturing role, the implicit references to the husband’s authority can easily be overshadowed by these statements about mutual respect and serving each other.

We conclude that the new MF has diminished male headship in marriage. The 1999 MF is influenced by the pressures of secular society concerning the position of husband and wife, and also makes it easier for husbands and wives to go along with current views of marriage. The church should not be ashamed to retain the Biblical basis; the new MF, however, accommodates the spirit of the age.

We maintain that the headship-submission arrangement for marriage is clearly indicated in Scripture. In Genesis, we read about the creation of man, male and female. In Gen 2:18-24, the LORD clearly indicates that there is an order in the creation of male and female, with the woman being taken from the man. This order implies a headship role for the male and a submissive role for the female, as is clear from what the Apostle Paul writes in I Tim 2:13. Moreover, Paul also alludes to Gen 2:18-24 in Eph 5:22-33, a passage in which Paul clearly speaks about male headship and female submission in marriage. The point is: that is how God intended it from the beginning. Even the fall into sin did not nullify the headship-submission relationship for marriage.

That the headship-submission relationship is maintained after the fall into sin is further demonstrated in that Gen 3:16 speaks about the husband ruling over his wife. At the fall into sin, Eve had neglected to seek the guidance of her husband when the devil spoke to her, thereby thwarting Adam’s headship. After the fall, the woman would continue to desire her husband’s position, but God says that the divine order is that the husband will rule over his wife.

Children

The 1981 MF stated, “Moreover, under the blessing of God, who said: ‘Be fruitful and increase in number’ (Gen 1:28), they shall participate toward the increase of the human race” [“Vervolgens zullen zij onder de zegen van God, die gezegd heeft: ‘Weest vruchtbaar en wordt talrijk’ (Gen 1:28), meewerken aan de uitbreiding van het menselijk geslacht”]. The 1999 MF states, “Furthermore, through marriage, the LORD wants to build future generations with a view to the coming of His kingdom. In paradise, He said to the man and woman: ‘Be fruitful, increase in number and fill the earth.’ Also now, marriage partners are called to parenthood, *when the LORD gives the possibilities for it*”

["Daarnaast wil de Here door het huwelijk bouwen aan volgende generaties met het oog op de komst van zijn koninkrijk. In het paradijs zei Hij tegen man en vrouw: 'Weest vruchtbaar, wordt talrijk en vervult de aarde.' Ook nu worden echtgenoten geroepen tot het ouderschap, *wanneer de Here de mogelijkheden daarvoor geeft*"] (*Acta*, art. 52, p. 111).

The new MF leaves room for considering if and when to have children. For example, if a young couple wants to get ahead in career and finances, it could consider that it is not called to have children since the circumstances are not favourable. We conclude that the new MF makes it easier for husband and wife to go along with secular views concerning having children. The ambiguous way of speaking about the LORD giving possibilities for having children leaves room for accommodating a trend and allowing for relative standards, rather than living by the one and only absolute standard of God's Word.

In light of this, it is significant that the prayer in the 1981 MF stated, "Grant them wisdom and strength to raise their children in a God-fearing way, to the honour of your holy Name, *for the edification of your congregation*, and for the spread of the Gospel" ["Verleen hun wijsheid en kracht om die kinderen godvrezend op te voeden tot eer van uw heilige naam, *tot opbouw van uw gemeente* en tot verbreiding van het evangelie"]. The prayer in the 1999 MF states, "If you give them children, grant them then strength and wisdom to raise those children to your honour. Lead them thus *that they exert themselves for the members of Christ's congregation* and for all people whom you place on their path" ["Als U hun kinderen geeft, verleen hun dan kracht en wijsheid om die kinderen op te voeden tot uw eer. Leid hen zo, *dat zij zich inzetten voor de leden van Christus' gemeente* en voor alle mensen die U op hun weg plaats"] (*Acta*, art. 52, p. 113). In this way, the new prayer breaks the link between receiving children and building the church. Building the church now simply refers to the upbuilding of members of the congregation.

Furthermore, in this way an important link between the MF and the Form for Baptism is broken. The introduction to the prayer before baptism states that baptism will be administered "to the edification of the congregation" ["tot opbouw van de gemeente"] (1981 MF). One of the ways in which Christ gathers His church is by the birth of covenant children who are baptized into the Name of the Triune God.

The immediate connection between marriage and children is maintained throughout Scripture. We read about barren women (Sarah, Rebekkah, Hannah, Manoah's wife, and Elizabeth), who obviously considered their barren state unusual (to say the least) in marriage. This can be linked to Gen 1:26-28, where we read of God deciding to create man in His image. Gen 1:27 describes man as being created male and female, while the first thing mentioned

thereafter in the blessing of Gen 1:28 is: "Be fruitful and increase in number." This divine arrangement is not abandoned after the fall but maintained. After the fall, the LORD spoke to Eve about pain in childbearing (Gen 3:16). Moreover, Adam named his wife Eve "...because she would become the mother of all the living" (Gen 3:20). Paul reinforces this divine arrangement in I Tim 2:15, when he says: "But women will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety."

Conclusion

As a general conclusion, we can say that the changes made in the 1999 MF affect the husband/wife relationship, the parents/children relationship, and the children/congregation relationship.

It appears from our study that the GKN has left what we understand to be the Biblical basis for marriage.

The sister churches in the Netherlands are moored to a floating dock, perhaps nice and tight, but still going up and down with the tides.

Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad
Canadian Reformed Churches

The Dutch deputies forwarded it to Synod Zuidhorn 2002, where it became an agenda item. Synod Zuidhorn denied all the appeals lodged against the new Marriage Form and also rejected the comments that your committee made in its document. Zuidhorn decided that the new Marriage Form expresses sufficiently the headship of the male as well as the Biblical mandate for married couples to have children. Synod also said that the new Form should be judged on its own merits, not in comparison with its predecessor (www.gs Zuidhorn.gkv.nl).²

The delegates to the GKN synod held in Zuidhorn did discuss the matter with the deputies of the Dutch churches. Their discussion with the Dutch deputies merely confirmed your committee's conclusions based on the decision of Synod Leusden 1999. The most telling fact that came out of their meeting with the Dutch deputies was that the catalyst for changing the Form was that many Dutch young people no longer could honestly say "I do" within the context of the existing Form, and therefore the churches felt compelled to change the Form in order to enable those marrying to answer honestly.

Our conclusion is that the new Marriage Form does indeed diminish

²At the time of writing its report, your committee had not yet received a bound copy of the Acta of Synod Zuidhorn. However, the decisions of Zuidhorn were officially available on the Internet.

and weaken the Scriptural teaching about marriage.

5.2.2. Hymns

In accordance with the strategy outlined by Synod Berkel and Rodenrijs 1996 for making new hymns available for use in the worship services, the Dutch deputies had distributed a list of 255 hymns to the churches soon after that Synod. In answer to appeals about the propriety of having the deputies distribute a list of hymns while the Church Order seems to suggest that Synod is to approve the hymns to be sung rather than delegate this task, Synod Leusden 1999 decided to approve 121 hymns for use in the worship services (*Acta Leusden 1999*, p. 141). The churches were to “show restraint” (“terughoudend te zijn”) in using the remaining 134 hymns, meaning that those churches which had started to sing them could continue doing so, while those churches which had not starting using them should refrain from doing so. This procedural matter has caused much unrest in the Dutch sister churches. Your committee is of the opinion that, as sister churches, we should not become involved with this procedural matter; our focus should be the forest, not the trees.

Of more importance is the large increase in hymns. Synod Zuidhorn 2002 reduced the 121 hymns approved by Synod Leusden to 117 in answer to various appeals about content, but added another 90 hymns (www.gszuidhorn.gkv.nl). In our report to Synod Neerlandia 2001, we stated: “While there is no principial objection to the use of hymns in the worship service, historically the proliferation of hymns has come at the expense of the singing of the Psalms” (*Acts Neerlandia 2001*, p. 242). Since we are not opposed to the use of hymns, the number of hymns becomes a rather subjective matter. Ultimately, it is the task of the local consistory to ensure that the use of hymns does not suppress the use of Psalms.

However, since the *Gereformeerd Kerkboek* is, as the name suggests, the “church book” of our Dutch sister churches, there is something to be said for retaining some kind of proportion within that book. A proper proportion between the number of Psalms and hymns would in itself reflect the importance – and even the priority – of the Psalms. It is important to note that the Dutch churches have plans to add even more hymns to their collection; this increase could well lead to hundreds of hymns. While realizing that even this matter of proper proportion may appear to be very subjective, your committee considers that this matter should be raised with the Dutch sister churches.

5.2.3. Fourth Commandment

General Synod Leusden 1999 had to deal with the matter of interpreting the fourth commandment for today. Rev. D. Ophoff had preached a sermon in 1996, in which he stated that there is no *divine ordinance* underlying Sunday as a day of rest (*Acta Leusden*, pp. 26,28). The matter made its way to General Synod after a member of the congregation appealed to the consistory to declare that this statement was incorrect. The consistory denied his appeal. He appealed to Classis, which also denied his appeal, so he turned to Regional Synod, which sustained his appeal. The consistory then appealed the Regional Synod's decision to General Synod.

Synod Leusden declared that the view that Sunday as day of rest is not founded upon a divine command cannot be condemned (*Acta Leusden*, p. 28). Synod gave no exegetical reasons; there is not even a single reference to a Biblical text in its decision. Even the report of the committee serving Synod made only scant reference to the Bible. Synod relied heavily on the statements of the Synod of Dordt 1618/1619 pertaining to the Sabbath/Sunday issue. These statements are interpreted to mean that rest functions only for the purpose of making time for worship (*Acta Leusden*, p. 29). Synod also stated that there has always been room in the Reformed churches for different views about resting on Sunday (*Acta Leusden*, p. 29). Furthermore, Synod posited that what Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism says about the day of rest should not be pressed to mean that we have a direct ordinance from the LORD to maintain Sunday as a day of rest (*Acta Leusden*, p. 29). As far as Lord's Day 38 is concerned, Synod followed the recommendation of the committee report that the phrase "the day of rest" should not be read normatively; rather than being prescriptive, it is claimed to be descriptive (*Acta Leusden*, p. 350).

Many appeals were lodged against the decision of Synod Leusden 1999. Synod Zuidhorn 2002 denied the appeals. Synod Zuidhorn urged the churches in general, and the appellants in particular, to safeguard the peace and unity which, according to Synod, has always existed among supporters of the various views concerning the fourth commandment. Synod based this on two grounds: (1) the peace and unity of the church is served when one does not try to bind others beyond the accepted doctrine, also with respect to the fourth commandment; and (2) among adherents of different views there is agreement that Sunday is a gift of the Lord, the day on which the congregation ought to come together to rejoice in the LORD's great deeds of creation and redemption (www.gszuidhorn.gkv.nl). Synod Zuidhorn did not provide any study of Biblical texts about the Sabbath/Sunday issue.

According to these two Dutch Synods, there has been a stream of thought in the history of the Reformed churches which maintains that Sunday as day of rest is not based on a divine ordinance. We must understand clearly the basic issue which Leusden was addressing. That basic issue is whether there is room within the Reformed churches for this view. Leusden decided that there is room for this view, and claimed that this is in keeping with the history of the Reformed churches. This also explains Zuidhorn's statement about safeguarding peace and unity between defenders of both views.

The decisions of Leusden and Zuidhorn should not be interpreted to mean that the Dutch sister churches no longer believe in Sunday as the day of rest. At the Synods of Leusden and Zuidhorn, the Dutch churches were not *adopting* Rev. D. Ophoff's view, but *allowing room* for it. This probably also explains why these two Synods did not deem it necessary to go into a detailed study of Biblical texts relating to the matter; they based their decisions largely on an appeal to the history of exegesis and the history of the church.

Our conclusion is that the decisions of Leusden and Zuidhorn about the fourth commandment are based on unconvincing argumentation. Synod Leusden stated that in the history of the Reformed churches there have always been different views on the meaning of the fourth commandment for today, implying that these different views were tolerated and officially accepted. Other than making the assertion, the Dutch sister churches provide little proof. Leusden referred to the statements of the Synod of Dordt 1618/19, but the interpretation of these statements is a disputed matter. The only other significant historical reference is in the committee report serving Synod Leusden, and is of recent vintage. The committee report refers to the Synod of Hoogeveen 1969/70, which dealt with the place and role of the decalogue but avoided the issue of the fourth commandment because it considered the issue too complex. If the Dutch sister churches wanted to prove that there has always been room for and official acceptance of different views on the fourth commandment, they should have marshalled stronger historical evidence.

Furthermore, the way in which Synod Leusden dispensed with the fact that Lord's Day 38 speaks of "the day of rest" is unconvincing. No evidence is given that this description of the first day of the week does not include a prescriptive element for the Reformed churches. At the same time, the description of different views as identified by the Synod of Dordt 1618/19 has received prescriptive status.

5.2.4. Theological University as “Knowledge Centre”

In its report to Synod Neerlandia 2001, your committee stated that “...the development of the Theological University as a “Knowledge Centre” for the Churches signals a departure from the long standing principle that such a school has as its only aim the training of future ministers of the Word” (*Acts Neerlandia*, p. 243). It appears, however, that this shift has much to do with the restructuring of the Theological University in order to be an accredited institution within the European Union (Press Release of the Board of Governors, in *De Reformatie* 76 (42) August 11, 2001). Since there is no evidence that that this matter impinges upon faithfulness to the “...Reformed basis in the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity...” (*Acts Neerlandia 2001*, p. 95), your committee concludes that we should not pursue this matter.

5.2.5. “Professionalizing” of the Ministry

In its report to Synod Neerlandia 2001, your committee stated that “The rise of the ‘pastoral worker’, the granting of permission to those pursuing doctoral studies to practice their preaching skills, and concern to regulate the continuing education of ministers, especially for those new to the ministry suggest a ‘professionalizing’ of the ministry” (*Acts Neerlandia 2001*, pp. 242,243). Your committee has found no evidence that these matters reflect a professionalizing of the ministry. We do not see anything negative in these developments and suggest that we not pursue these matters.

5.2.6. Increasing centralization of church life

While there is increasing centralization in mission and evangelism, with national organizations and committees doing much work, your committee cannot say that this is a wrong practice. The polity of the Dutch churches remains non-hierarchical, and the increased centralization does not suggest that this is changing. We have no reason to conclude that the Dutch churches “...are deviating from their Reformed basis in the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity...” (*Acts Neerlandia 2001*, p. 95). We suggest that this matter not be pursued further.

5.3. Correspondence

5.3.1. In November 2001, two copies of the *Acts* of Synod Neerlandia 2001 were mailed to the deputies of the Dutch churches.

5.3.2. In a letter dated December 4, 2001, the attention of the Dutch deputies was drawn to the disappointment about lack of information concerning a change in the Church Order and the

- considerations of Synod Neerlandia concerning the celebration of the Lord's Supper by army chaplains.
- 5.3.3. In a letter dated March 5, 2002, a copy of the study on the Marriage Form was sent to the deputies of the Dutch churches. Receipt of this was acknowledged in a letter dated March 28, 2002, in which we were informed this study would be forwarded to Synod.
 - 5.3.4. In May 2002, a CD containing all the reports of deputies to General Synod Zuidhorn was received.
 - 5.3.5. In a letter dated June 25, 2002, the Dutch deputies were informed of our surprise at learning that the study report on the Marriage Form had been passed on to the Synod, and that this seemed to be a departure from past practices where the communication was between deputies/committees.
 - 5.3.6. In January 2002, the consistory of the church at London forwarded to the committee a document which they had originally sent to Synod Neerlandia 2001. This document pertained to the GKN's 1993 decision allowing communicant women the right to vote in the election of officebearers. This was received for information.
 - 5.3.7. In a letter dated July 1, 2002, the consistory of the church at Calgary sent a letter to the committee expressing concern about new developments in the worship services of the Dutch sister churches. The letter included the address of an internet site of church services in Groningen. This was received for information.
 - 5.3.8. In a letter dated April 9, 2003, the BBK informed us of decisions of Synod Zuidhorn with respect to the Canadian Reformed Churches. The Dutch sister churches have entered into sister church relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
 - 5.3.9. The Committee received email correspondence, dated March 18, 2003, from Dr. P. van Gorp with copies of letters sent to churches in the Netherlands calling them to reformation. Consistent with the approach as found in the Report to Synod Neerlandia, the Committee did not interact with this as it does not have a mandate to interact with private submissions of members of other church federations (Report 5.5.4, Acts 2001 p. 243).

5.4. Change in Communication

As can be gleaned from the correspondence (March 5, 2002, March 28, 2002, and June 25, 2002), the Dutch deputies appear to have a different *modus operandi* compared to the well-known and well-established practice to which we were accustomed. As a result, your committee has been unable to develop meaningful correspondence with its counterparts, while at the same time

learning after the fact that it was invited to partake in the discussions at Synod. We believe that the mandate and practice of your committee is out of step with the mandate and practice of the Dutch deputies. We are convinced that this will affect the communication, but we are not sure of all the implications.

5.5. Recommendations.

Your committee recommends that Synod 2004 decide:

- 5.5.1. To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKN under the adopted rules;
- 5.5.2. Not to pursue any further the matter of the Theological University as "Knowledge Centre," the matter of increased centralization of church life, and the matter of the "professionalizing" of the ministry;
- 5.5.3. To instruct the CRCA, in accordance with Rule One of the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, to suggest to the next Synod of the GKN that the proportion of Psalms and hymns in the *Gereformeerd Kerkboek* should reflect the importance – and even the priority – of the Psalms;
- 5.5.4. To instruct the CRCA, in accordance with Rule One of the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, to convey to the next Synod of the Dutch sister churches that the decisions of Leusden and Zuidhorn about the fourth commandment are based on unconvincing argumentation;
- 5.5.5. To instruct the CRCA, in accordance with Rule One of the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, to address the next Synod of the Dutch sister churches on behalf of Synod to the effect that their recent decisions pertaining to the Marriage Form weaken the Scriptural teaching about marriage;
- 5.5.6. To instruct the CRCA, with a view to the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, to explore what, if any, implications flow from the changed role of the Dutch deputies both in relation to their Synods as well as in relation to the deputies of the CRCA.

6. International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

6.1. Mandate

Synod decided:

- 6.1.1. To withdraw the proposed change to the Constitution of the ICRC by Synod Fergus, and mandate the CRCA to make this known to the ICRC;
- 6.1.2. To continue the membership of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the ICRC.

6.2. Correspondence

- 6.2.1. In a letter dated May 29, 2001, the Secretary of the ICRC was informed of Synod Neerlandia's decision to withdraw the request made by Synod Fergus 1998 to address the change

in the Constitution Art. IV.1.a. made by the ICRC at Seoul.

- 6.2.2. In a letter dated January 4, 2002, the Corresponding Secretary for the ICRC, Rev. M. van Beveren, informed the churches that he had decided to step down as secretary. He informed the churches that Rev. C. van Spronsen had been appointed to replace him.
- 6.2.3. In a letter dated February 11, 2002 Rev. C. Van Spronsen introduced himself as the new Corresponding Secretary. He acknowledged the faithful service of Rev. M. van Beveren who had functioned as Corresponding Secretary since the founding of the ICRC in 1982.

6.3. ICRC 2001

The fifth *International Conference of Reformed Churches* was held in Philadelphia, PA, from June 20-27.

- 6.3.1. The executive for the conference consisted of Rev. J.J. Peterson (chairman); Rev. B. de Graaf (vice-chairman); Rev. M. van Beveren (corresponding secretary); Rev. Dr. P.J. Naylor (recording secretary); and Mr. H. A. Berends (treasurer).
- 6.3.2. The conference heard presentations on *Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church – A Reformed (Continental) Perspective*, by J. DeJong; *The Unity of the Church in the Westminster Tradition*, by W.D.J. McKay; *Hermeneutics and the Bible*, by J. van Bruggen; *Work Among the Jewish People: Historical Perspectives and the Contemporary Challenge*, by J.S. Ross; *The Regulative Principle of Worship*, by G.I. Williamson; and, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Believer: Illustrated by the Spirit's office of leading the believer from regeneration to glorification*, by C. Pronk. These presentations are available in the published *Proceedings*.
- 6.3.3. The application for membership in the ICRC by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI) was unanimously approved.
- 6.3.4. The Free Church of Scotland Continuing's delegation was invited to be seated as non-voting participants for the duration of the 5th Assembly of the ICRC.
- 6.3.5. With respect to the Constitution, the following motion was carried:
The ICRC decided that the following amendment to the Constitution Art. IV.a. be proposed to the ICRC in 2005:
 "Those churches shall be admitted as members which:
 a. *adhere and are faithful to one or more of the confessional standards stated in the basis, as each church has adopted one or more of these as its own standards.*

Or

- b. *adhere and are faithful to the Reformed Confessions which are equivalent in content to the Confessions listed in the Basis (Art. 2), and which confession (or confessions) shall be proposed to be added to article II of the Constitution”* (Conference Minutes 51, p 35).

- 6.3.1. The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa were appointed to host the next ICRC in 2005.
- 6.3.2. Informal meetings were held with representatives from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, and the Reformed Church of New Zealand. More formal meetings were held with the delegates from the Presbyterian Church of Korea – Kosin and the Independent Reformed Church of Korea. Many informal conversations were held as well to gather impressions on life in the churches represented at the Conference.
- 6.3.3. The Conference was well organized. The actual meeting did leave something to be desired as much time was spent on procedural and constitutional matters and the order of the day was adhered to rather loosely. Upon request of some delegates, the schedule was rearranged so that the Conference was able to conclude a day sooner than originally planned.
- 6.3.4. Delegates, especially from the younger churches, expressed concern that some of the topics were too abstract and did not speak much to their situation.

6.4. Considerations

- 6.4.1. Participation in the ICRC serves as a reminder of the catholicity of the Church as the Lord gathers his people from all tongues and tribes and nations. The ICRC provides an excellent opportunity to be exposed to the catholic church gathering work of our Lord. It is regrettable that only a few members of each federation are able to participate. Interacting with the brotherhood from around the world, being aware of their struggles, serves as a reminder of what truly is needful.
- 6.4.2. The papers presented deal with issues that are worthy of attention by the membership in general. It can only be encouraged that members obtain copies of the *Proceedings* and be edified by the papers presented.
- 6.4.3. While the delegation to the ICRC voted to receive the RPCNEI as a member of the ICRC, there is disagreement among the Committee members as to whether this is within the mandate of the ICRC delegates. At issue is the statement of Synod Fergus 1998 “to mandate the CRCA to make and support membership recommendations at ICRC for those

churches only with which we have official sister-church relations" (see Acts Synod Neerlandia, Art. 53; 3.4 and 4:3. Synod Chatham should clarify whether,

a. This applies to **sponsorship** (cf. ICRC Constitution Art. IV 1b. "Those churches shall be admitted as members which ... have been sponsored by at least two member Churches;)

Or

b. To the actual process of **voting at the Conference** (Art. 4. 1.e. "are accepted by a two-third majority vote of the delegations of the member Churches, every member Church having one vote").

Synod is asked to make a judgment as to which interpretation is correct so that the delegates at future Conferences can represent the position of the churches.

6.4.1. With respect to the Constitutional amendment, the first suggestion basically reverts back to the original version while the second works with the idea of the current edition but leaves the Constitution open for endless revisions. The Committee suggests to leave the Constitution unchanged as the matter has been discussed sufficiently and there are no grounds justifying a change.

6.4.2. While one can appreciate the concern of representatives from younger churches to have matters that are of relevance to them, the established churches should have ample opportunity to discuss things that are of relevance to them.

6.4.3. As the next Conference is scheduled to be held in South Africa, travel costs could be higher than other times. Sufficient funds should be made available for the delegates.

6.5. Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

6.5.1. Synod give a clear answer to the question posed under Consideration 6.4.3.

6.5.2. Synod decide to mandate the CRCA:

6.5.2.1. To continue to represent the Canadian Reformed Churches in the ICRC and send a delegation to the Conference scheduled for 2005 in South Africa;

6.5.2.2. To inform the Secretary of the ICRC that the Constitution Art. IV 1 should be left unchanged since there are no new grounds;

6.5.2.3. To inform the Secretary of the ICRC that issues of concern to the founding churches of the ICRC should be given due attention;

6.5.2.4. To submit a Report of the 2005 ICRC to the next Synod, with an evaluation and recommendations;

7. Other Matters

7.1. With respect to the Pilgrim Reformed Churches in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia (GGRM) Synod mandated the CRCA:

7.1.1. To gather more information about the GGRM;

7.1.2. To consult with the GKN and the FRCA regarding the GGRM;

7.1.3. To inform the GGRM of our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship and ask if they can live in a relationship with those rules;

7.1.4. To discuss with representatives of the GGRM how they envision a relationship between two federations so far apart geographically can be meaningful, also reminding them that the FRCA should have the primary contact with the GGRM;

7.1.5. To come with recommendations to the next Synod.

7.2. General

Synod also mandated the CRCA:

7.2.1. Investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship outside the Americas;

7.2.2. Respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meetings of other churches outside the Americas;

7.2.3. To serve Synod 2004 with a report with suitable Recommendations, to be sent to the churches six months prior to the next General Synod.

7.3. Budget.

Synod adopted the following budget for the CRCA:

ICRC fees	\$ 3,500
Meeting ICRC 2001	\$ 1,000
Travel	\$ 2,500
Miscellaneous	<u>\$ 3,000</u>
Total	<u>\$10,000</u>

7.4. Considerations

7.4.1. GGRM

7.4.1.1. In an email dated July 3, 2001, response was requested concerning the benefit they envisaged in a relationship, what they thought about our rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, and with which churches they currently had or were seeking fellowship.

7.4.1.2. In an email dated October 19, 2001, response was given to the questions submitted previously. In this response it was evident that the GGRM desires practical help in terms of theological training, office bearer training, in mission work and in mission aid. We were informed that at present they only have a sister

church relationship with the Gereja-Gereja Refomasi di Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT). Fellowship is also desired so that those visiting each other's countries could attend the Lord's Supper and ministers be invited to preach.

- 7.4.1.3. In a letter dated November 8, 2001, a copy of the Acts of Synod Neerlandia was mailed out to the GGRM.
- 7.4.1.4. In an email dated December 4, 2001 we expressed our concern about how meaningful a relationship would be, especially in light of the practical help they seek which as Committee we are not in a position to address. We also made the suggestion to seek contact with a local church in the federation that could provide the practical help they desire.
- 7.4.1.5. In an email dated October 21, 2002 we received some more information. At present there are 10 churches with about 1500 members. There are 8 active ministers. With respect to the Australian Churches, while the GGRM has recognized them as true churches, the FRCA has not yet reciprocated because the FRCA does not think the GGRM keeps the Sunday as a day of rest and in the second place that in one of the churches there are deaconesses (See Acts FRCA 2000, p.139). These deaconesses function as helpers of the needy and sick people but are not part of the ruling elders. We were also informed that they had taken up contact with the Church at Smithville in response to our suggestion. Finally, we were informed that they had to change their name and are now called the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis in East Nusa Tenggara.
- 7.4.1.6. Synod 2000 of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia decided that the situation in the GGRM "needs to be stabilized before recommendations regarding sister church relationships can be considered." It would "support the GGRM in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches" (Article 49).

7.4.2. General

- 7.4.2.1. Requests were received to send delegates to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in 2001 and 2002, to the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) in 2002, and the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa in 2002. An invitation was also received from the Presbyterian Church in Korea-Kosin to send a delegate at their expense to mark their 50th anniversary as a denomination.

- 7.4.2.2. Rather than simply attend the Synods or Assemblies as observers where there is little time for serious interaction with representatives, the Committee decided to draw up a schedule of visitation to the churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The inclusion of attendance at a Synod or Assembly would be a secondary consideration. Rev. J. Huijgen and Rev. C.J. VanderVelde visited the Netherlands and Scotland in May 2002. Br. H. Leyenhorst visited the PCK in September 2002. If things develop as planned, br. W. Pleiter will visit the churches in Australia in 2003 and a visit to South Africa will be coordinated with the ICRC scheduled for 2005. These visits are very important for the relationships.
- 7.4.2.3. Declarations were issued upon request for a number of ministers visiting other countries.
- 7.4.2.4. The Committee received a number of letters from churches in various parts in the world providing information and often seeking financial support. Some of this information may be of interest to the churches in general. Synod needs to give guidelines to the CRCA as to what to do with information of this nature, whether it should be forwarded to the churches in some way or not.

7.4.3. Budget

In order to fulfill its task in a meaningful way, the Committee needs sufficient funds. Especially with respect to the ICRC, it needs to be kept in mind that assessments are in US dollars. At the time of sending this report to the Printer (June 2003), no details were available on actual amounts spent to date. This will need to be gleaned from the Report on the General Fund.

7.4.4. Terms

Synod 2001 appointed the following brothers: J. Huijgen (2010); H.E. Hoogstra (2007); E. Kampen (convener) (2004); H. Leyenhorst (2010); W. Pleiter (2010); C.J. VanderVelde (2010). As the term of the convener is ending, Synod will need to make one new appointment. It is important to have six members on the Committee both with a view to distribution of the work and with a view to discussion of issues.

7.5. Recommendations

The Committee recommends that Synod decide:

- 7.5.1. With respect to the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis in East Nusa Tenggara:

7.5.1.1. Not to enter in Ecclesiastical Fellowship at this time but to give the contact with the church at Smithville an opportunity to develop;

7.5.1.2. To recommend to the churches in the federation to receive visitors from the GGRCNTT in the knowledge that these churches adhere to the Three Forms of Unity;

7.5.2. To approve the following budget for the period 2004-2007

ICRC fees	\$ 5,000
Meeting ICRC 2005	\$ 4,000
Travel	\$ 3,500
Miscellaneous	<u>\$ 2,000</u>
Total	\$14,500

7.5.3. To give the CRCA the following general mandate:

7.5.3.1. To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship outside the Americas;

7.5.3.2. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meetings of other churches outside the Americas;

7.5.3.3. To serve Synod 2007 with a report with suitable Recommendations, to be sent to the churches six months prior to the next General Synod.

7.5.4. To appoint one new member to serve on the CRCA for a nine year term (till 2013).

Appendices

Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship- Canadian Reformed Churches

1. The churches shall assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy, and be watchful for deviations.
2. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts or Minutes and otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible, in translation)
3. The churches shall consult each other when entering into relations with third parties.
4. The churches shall accept one another's attestations or certificates of good standing, which also means admitting members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation or certificate.

5. The Churches shall open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches.

In exercising these relations, the churches shall strive to implement also the following:

6. When major changes or additions are being considered to the confessions, church government or liturgy, the churches shall be informed in order that as much consultation can take place as possible before a final decision is taken.
7. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to participate as much as local regulations permit.

(Acts Synod Lincoln 1992, Art. 50, IV B 1-7)

Presbyterian Church of Korea Fifty Year Jubilee

By Harold Leyenhorst

The Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) celebrated the 50-year jubilee of their federation on September 24, 2002 during their 52nd General Assembly. Special invitations were sent to the five federations with which they have formal relations. The invitations included all the costs for one delegate from each federation. As a member of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, I was appointed as representative of the Canadian Reformed Churches to visit our sister churches in Korea. Together with my wife Annette, I visited Korea for ten days. What follows are our impressions of Korea and information about and from the PCK.

The country

South Korea has a population of fifty million of whom almost half live in the capital city of Seoul and its surrounding suburbs. Seventy percent of the country is mountains, resulting in very densely populated cities. Most of the people live in apartments of twelve to twenty story buildings, of which there are thousands. Korea has an extensive freeway system, many with tolls, and serious traffic congestion in the cities. We were impressed with the modern engineering of buildings and bridges and a nation that has a standard of living close to that of North America.

The people are very friendly, courteous and helpful. There are few who speak English, although there was always someone helping us with translation and directions. We have fond memories of the hospitality we received from Rev. Ahn and his wife Hanna. They took it upon themselves to be our guides and translators for most of the time we were in Korea.

Korea has very little crime, and security is not the concern that it is in Canada. There is a healthy respect for authority and an obvious respect for personal and public property. The most difficult adjustment we had was with the food. Most of our meals were provided for us, with many of them being cafeteria style at the theological college or the Korea Youth centre where we were housed. Koreans eat often and they eat a lot, but it must be

healthy because we saw few people that were overweight. Soup and rice with a large variety of spicy vegetables and various types of seafood did take some getting used to.

The church

The Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) has thirty-four synods, 1500 churches, 2300 pastors, 3200 elders and 400,000 baptized members. Korea Theological Seminary has 400 students and fifteen faculty members. Kosin University has 3,500 undergraduate students, 800 graduate students and 230 faculty members. The church has two hospitals with a total of 1,000 beds and 1,500 employees. The church has an extensive mission program with 220 missionaries in over forty countries. They have affiliate federations in the Southern Pacific, Europe and North America (approximately 100 churches).

The church operates an extensive Sunday school program, but there are no Christian elementary or high schools. The emphasis seems to be on post secondary education. This is in part caused by the severe restriction put in place by the government on non-government run schools. It was his desire for a Christian education for his children that brought Rev. Ahn to Canada in his sabbatical year. His two daughters are currently attending Credo Christian High School in Langley.

We attended two church services on the Sunday we were in Korea. Although we could not understand what was being said, we were able to sing with the congregation with the help of the Korea/English Hymnal provided by Rev. Ahn. The ministers removed their shoes when they went up to the pulpit (also always done in the homes) and there was a meal served in the church basement after the morning service. This is normal for every Sunday in most of the churches. Having a delegate from the Canadian Churches attending their service was considered an honour and I was requested to address the congregation at the end of the service.

General Assembly and celebration

The Kosin churches have a General Assembly every year in the week following their Thanksgiving weekend (September). The assembly is held at the Theological Seminary, which has a chapel that seats 1,200, apartments and dorms for 600 and a cafeteria that can serve up to 2,000 per hour. There were 508 voting delegates at the assembly.

The assembly started at three p.m. on Monday with a church service that included Lord's Supper. This was followed with elections that required eight voting booths and computerized vote-counting system.

Tuesday morning was the international session where the delegates of the visiting churches could address the Assembly. I was the first international delegate to speak and my address was translated sentence by sentence as I spoke. As well as offering congratulations on behalf of our churches I encouraged the Kosin churches to be faithful to our God and Saviour. I also extended an invitation to their members to attend our churches when they visit Canada.

The Jubilee celebration was held on Tuesday evening and consisted

of a two-hour concert, one hour of speeches and presentations and one hour that included a video presentation on the history of the church, concluding comments and a mission declaration.

I did not attend much of the rest of the Assembly because it was all in Korean and my time was better spent meeting with delegates and seminary professors on an individual basis. I was able to receive an update on the proceedings on the Saturday morning shortly before we left for the airport.

Concluding impressions

The PCK Kosin is a vibrant church committed to remaining Reformed and willing to be a leader in Asia in church development and mission cooperation. On more than one occasion the importance of the relationship with other Reformed churches was stressed. They recognized not only the importance of maintaining a Reformed character but also the difficulty to stay Reformed in a federation that is expecting to grow by fifty percent in the next eight years. Their churches struggle with many of the same problems that we do in our affluent society. There are also lingering effects of Confucianism in the Korean culture that are evident in the church.

We felt it was important that we visit the churches in Korea and our visit not only helped in establishing a better understanding of each other but it was also very beneficial for our relationship. I would like to conclude with some of the words spoken at the celebration by Rev. Sun Lee, the outgoing chairman of the Assembly. "We are the people who have received the grace of Jubilee. God has brought us this far in our denomination. Yes, we are few. But we are God centered, Bible centered and church centered. I encourage you to be thankful and joyful for the fact that we can identify with the Reformed faith. We need to step forward from defending God's truth to conquering the globe with God's truth. We need to be culture sensitive for that mission. God has given us the Spirit of power and let us embrace the world with his Word. Amen."

Address of Delegate to Synod Zuidhorn

By J. Huijgen

Dear Brothers and Members of Synod Zuidhorn 2002:

We are grateful that in the year 2002, fifty years after the death of one of the servants of the Reformed Churches (Liberated), Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, we can be here with you and share with you our greetings. We pass on to you the greetings of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

To give you an idea as to how we have been faring under the blessing of the Lord, let me share with you some of the memorable facts of the life of our churches. The Canadian Reformed Churches have been blessed with a steady increase in numbers. Last year we grew in membership by approximately 300 members to approximately 16000. The number of ministers (active and retired) and missionaries remained fairly steady at sixty-five.

The year 2001 was also the year in which a General Synod was held. This synod has been dubbed *the synod of the Ecclesiastical Contacts*. This was mainly because significant progress could be made in contacts with churches in North America. The contacts with the URCNA, the OPC, as well as the RCUS were the most remarkable. But significant was also the progress with the ERQ.

Our federation continues to see growth in the number of congregations. Two congregations became four congregations through the process of division due to growth. The most remarkable attempt to expand our churches is through the work of mission and evangelism. We enjoy various ways of mission. The missions in Brazil and Irian Jaya are known to you, but we also conduct mission work among the natives in northern British Columbia, as well as among mainly Chinese immigrants in Vancouver. In the vicinity of Hamilton we may work in the inner city to do mission.

Our Theological College continues to be blessed. Students from various ethnic backgrounds study in Hamilton; the library saw a substantial building expansion; a Pastoral Training Program is now in place for students in theology.

We may rejoice also in the facts that the Lord Jesus Christ continues to provide for his churches in Canada all that is needed so that week by week the Word can be proclaimed and his people can be built up in the most holy faith.

We, as delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches would like to wish you the Lord's blessing in your work here at Synod. Your chairman has called this Synod, the Synod of the beautiful things, and we wish with him that your Synod indeed may turn out to be a blessing for the churches you serve. But you must also realize: *er staan veel mooie dingen op het spel*. We are somewhat aware of the pressures you face, as you are called to deal with various matters, including many appeals out of the churches.

We have been instructed by our Synod to investigate various matters that are keeping you busy again. From the Acts of our General Synod Neerlandia 2001 you can glean that we have been instructed to:

- 1) stay in touch with your deputies concerning the relationship with the OPC in light of rule 3 of Ecclesiastical Fellowship;
- 2) to study the form for the solemnization of marriage adopted by Synod Leusden, to consult with your deputies and report to Synod 2004 whether this new form does indeed diminish the Scriptural teaching about marriage;
- 3) to make a thorough study of concerns raised in the churches and mentioned in the report serving at our last synod. To see whether the Reformed churches are deviating from the Reformed basis and the word of God and the Three forms of Unity. These concerns are: the increasing centralization in church life, the increase of the number of hymns, the shift of the Theological University from an institution for the training for the ministry to a knowledge centre, and an apparent professionalizing of the ministry;
- 4) to express our disappointment to the GKN that we were not informed that a major change to the Church Order was considered,

when revisions were prepared in the manner of ecclesiastical examinations.

Based on this mandate we have spoken with your deputies BBK regarding these matters. We are thankful that we received opportunity to sample your thoughts and to hear about your vision regarding the future.

Your deputies presented us with the practical issues of living in a secularized society which led up to the formation of the new Marriage Form. We urge you to consider that the pressures of the world can only be addressed by obedience to Scripture.

We were assured that the issues concerning the keeping of the Sunday as a day of rest were still within the parameters of opposing exegetical positions, and that the practice of keeping the day of rest is historically deeply rooted. We are concerned, however, that the decision of Synod Leusden has effectively changed the character of the Sunday, and will as such have a deep impact on the development of the churches.

It was very helpful to learn that the process of establishing a hymnal is a long process of experimentation and may eventually lead to a bundle of songs that addresses the various events the church commemorates. We wonder whether this is going to happen at the expense of the psalms and will eventually put man in the centre of the worship service.

We touched on some concerns that had arisen because of new situations you face, as there are asylum seekers desiring to partake in the Lord's Supper. We took note of the fact that your Theological University faces various challenges, not in the least the low number of enrollment of students. At the same time, the quality of scholarly excellence continues to improve.

Your new format of meeting as Synod, with inclusion of the means of electronic communication, shows that you attempt to stay with the times as you do not shy away from interacting with new realities. We hope that with all your efficiency you will not develop an ecclesiastical bureaucracy, which could make the federation of churches top heavy, and eventually crush the grass roots. May the Lord help you to be steadfast in a ever more secularizing society.

We have heard at various levels that you expect the work of our Lord and Saviour, the King of kings and the Lord of lords to be revealed more and more till the final day dawns and you will experience the brightest of days. As that is our expectation as well, we wish you the courage and the wisdom as well as the boldness to continue on the way of your calling. We do not know what the future holds, but we certainly know that the response of obedience to the calling of the Lord, will be blessed by God. In your history, more than fifty years ago, this was proven to come true.

You may have to work hard on various issues, especially considering the number of reactions out of the churches, but when you do the work as a work of service in obedience to God's revelation you may expect the blessing of our Lord.

We know that there are those who are somber and expect the worst and that there are those who are optimistic and expect the best. As you well

know, you cannot please everyone, but One calls us to please Him in all we do. If one would look to people one would despair. But as the psalmist says in Psalm 121, "Unto the hills I lift my eyes, from where comes all my aid, when troubled or afraid." But then he says as well, "My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Report on General Synod Zuidhorn 2002, and the Free Church of Scotland

By J. Huijgen

So Many New Impressions

As Rev. VanderVelde and I were commencing our travels, we felt the weekend, between The Netherlands and Scotland, would allow for some mental adjustment. Adjustment would be necessary in the face of our uncertainty. We would encounter many changes in our sister congregations of The Netherlands and of the churches in Scotland. Members of our Canadian churches, upon visitation to The Netherlands, had commented on the vast, noticeable, changes. We were aware that Scotland too, primarily after the divide, would present new situations. We were about to embark on many new impressions.

New Impressions in The Netherlands

On Monday May 13 Rev. VanderVelde and I travelled to The Netherlands from Vancouver. We arrived in The Netherlands at the conference centre of Mennorode on Wednesday morning and we met with the deputies of the Dutch sister churches to speak about concerns raised within our Canadian churches. We spoke with the deputies about the proposed Marriage Form, and the issues surrounding their celebration of the Sabbath. We discussed the number of hymns and their selection process, the various forms for the Lord's Supper, and the new academic setup of the Theological University. We voiced concern regarding the new format upon meeting at the Synod, the way individuals could now make submissions to Synod, how deputies envisioned the future of the Dutch churches, and the so-called "Third Party Relationships." We conveyed all the issues we had been directed to discuss by the Synod Neerlandia. Some of these concerns had been submitted ahead of us. Our Dutch counterparts intimated some of their uneasiness and reflections. Concerning the Sunday issues, for instance, we were assured by our counterparts that the Dutch churches maintain strong Sunday traditions. Rev. Vandervelde and I wondered whether traditions alone would suffice. We requested scriptural basis for some of their assertions. We were presented with their rationale, a range of interpretations existing from one end of the "spectrum" to the other with variations in between. We observed that their unity and uniformity has been exchanged for plurality. These discussions were successful in creating the ground work necessary for longer exchanges in the future with these deputies in The Netherlands. There is, however, another problem that has arisen in our discourse.

The Changing Roles of Deputies

We noticed, for example, that the list of items for the agenda of their General Synod contained our summary of the study of the new Marriage Form. We never intended to have this placed on the agenda of their Synod. This alteration was accomplished because the role of deputies has changed substantially. In the past, deputies studied an issue and submitted a report, an independent and final document with recommendations given to the Synod. Today the Dutch deputies present to Synod any material they receive omitting discretion as to admissibility and relevance. During Synod the Dutch deputies are in attendance, to continue discussions and expedite the decisions. It should be noted that these deputies have the potential to be extremely influential due to their numbers (e.g. they have twenty deputies for relations with churches abroad). As a result discussions involving our members cannot be conducted unless our delegates partake at the Synod level. This degree of participation would require our physical presence for proper representation.

After our discussion with the Dutch deputies, Rev. VanderVelde and I met with the delegates from various churches in different countries. We witnessed a program containing strong overtones of missionary activities offered for churches abroad. A presentation was given from the committee for Mission and Mission Aid *Zending* and *Hulpverlening* and a presentation and meeting of the IRTT (International Reformed Theological Training Centre). The majority of their students are Kenyan and Indonesian. Being deputies from Canadian churches that have conducted mission work in various parts of the world and at home, we attended these aspects of the conference with great interest and were much encouraged by the work of our Lord.

General Synod 2002

It is the custom of the Dutch Synod to meet on Friday and Saturday in full session. The rest of the week is devoted to Internet meetings containing members of Synod and members of different committees. A Reformed virtual chat room serves as a way of facilitating informal exchanges of thought. The committees prepare a majority of their proposals in this way. The proceedings at the Dutch Synod are worth noting. The opening includes a silent prayer by all members. This prayer is followed by meditation on Scripture and then discussion of the passage with an assigned neighbour. Singing and a public prayer ensue. Rev. VanderVelde and I arrived on Friday May 17. The vice-chairman introduced the delegates from the various churches, and every region was dealt with individually. We heard from the brothers in Australia and their words contained both appreciation and concern. We had opportunity to voice our concerns as instructed by Synod Neerlandia 2001. Our speech was well received (the text of our speech is published separately). Although our concerns were noted, emphasis was given to God and their joy that He cares for his people in Canada and everywhere. Our day was filled with speeches and responses from around the world. We felt a strong sense of world wide

community during the General Synod. It is quite impressive to meet the many in this world who wish to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The contacts we made officially and in private left us very encouraged.

The days were not without tensions. The Free Church of Scotland Majority had sent delegates, and the Free Church of Scotland Continuing had sent delegates. The speeches delivered by both churches showed the awkwardness of being involved in a divided church. The Free Reformed Church of South Africa, represented by Rev. Pieter Nel, spoke strongly to the Dutch Churches against establishing contacts with "Dopper" churches. The very delegates of those "Dopper" churches were in attendance and spoke right after him with some dismay.

Changes to the Dutch liturgy

Having the privilege of spending the Lord's Day in Holland, we attended three church services. We discovered ways of worship quite new to us. In some instances the liturgy was very different. The congregation sang out various "amens" and the reading of Holy Scripture was executed by young girls. There were recitations of poems during the worship service. English hymns were included in the congregational singing and the Apostles' Creed was alternately recited or sung by the congregation. We were told that these Dutch ministers are attempting to make the worship services more interesting. There is a special word for that in the Dutch churches: "*opleuken*." It was relayed to us that one minister brought a mask onto the pulpit to prove his point; another used a potato. One minister, while demonstrating to children, used a cell phone and dialled someone in the church, and hung up abruptly. This was his method of illustrating the do's and don'ts of communicating with God. Children can now download pictures or questions regarding sermons from their church's website. When we reflect back on the trip to the Dutch Churches we feel a sense of surprise and sadness. We were told that Canadian churches are approximately fifteen years behind Dutch churches. In other words, we would eventually face similar challenges in the future. In our defence we stated that both Dutch and Canadian churches had a parallel beginning after the Second World War. Both churches have supported the members of first, second and third generations. Both countries have likewise had the same developmental issues of church, school and their organizations. Rev. VanderVelde and I believe we were witness to a regression and not a progression. We suspect the Dutch churches to be relying on the same practices the Christian Reformed Churches in North America embraced fifteen or twenty years ago. We noticed a general trend among the Dutch churches which we summarize as a fear. This fear involves being identified as a type of church with exclusive truths. The Reformed character is almost unrecognizable. The Dutch churches are attempting to reinvent themselves in hopes of establishing an identity.

Impressions of Scotland

On Monday May 20, Rev. VanderVelde and I arrived in Scotland. On our way to visit a delegation of the Free Church "Continuing" we enjoyed

a beautiful ride through the Scottish Highlands to the city of Inverness. We stayed at the manse of Rev. Maurice Roberts and his wife, who are very kind people. In the evening, we were introduced to Rev. John Macleod. Rev. Macleod is an interesting man, filled with great stories. All company present gave us a typical Scottish welcome, for which we were thankful. We sensed a great deal of anticipation with our host and his colleague. We were told that our evening meeting was informal, yet we received a lot of information – names and events – about the history leading to the official split in 2002 of the Scottish Reformed Churches. It was our good fortune to be supplied with these details as this information was very helpful to us.

Rev. VanderVelde and I experienced a refreshing sleep and a hearty breakfast in proper “Ye Olde Scottish” style. Later we were joined by Dr. Murdoch Murchison, Rev. Hugh Ferrier, Rev. Maurice Roberts and Rev. John MacLeod. We felt that a straight approach at this gathering was appropriate, since by delegation the Orthodox Presbyterian Church had previously completed an investigation and subsequent report, which we considered satisfactory and which the OPC served at the ICRC body. We therefore presented a very direct question. What would you want us to report back to the Canadian churches so these same churches can affirm their relationship with you? This question proved to be more difficult to answer than to pose. From the response we were given we realized that the original reasons for the split were evolving. Whereas the primary focus had been on allegations against a “leader” exhibiting improper behaviour, the direction of blame was shifting. The Free Church was now turning away from the old historical path, and changing. We received a very favourable impression of the Free Church “Continuing” with respect to its direction. This cordial and informative meeting was followed by good fellowship and a very impressive sightseeing tour. We did not spot the Loch Ness monster although there were moments where we were nearly fooled.

On Wednesday, Rev. VanderVelde and I took to the road again and ended up in Edinburgh. Driving on the left side of the road with a right-sided wheel is one challenge. To drive in Edinburgh city itself, is another! We ended up following a friendly taxi driver who was willing, free of charge, to lead us to “the Mound.” We were cordially received by the Free Church of Scotland “Majority,” a ten man delegation. By comparison we were grossly understaffed but this fact had no bearing on the proceedings. We utilized the question we had presented to our brothers in Inverness the day before. “What would you want us to report back to the Canadian churches, so that these churches can affirm their relationship with you?” Our question needed to be explained more than once. Their answers at this meeting were helpful, and confirmed to us that the grounds for the split had emerged from a personal issue into doctrinal insights, and historical perspectives.

After the meeting we, along with our Scottish brothers, enjoyed a superb noon meal in historical surroundings. After this meal we toured through old Edinburgh accompanied by Rev. W. Mackay, a willing and knowledgeable tour guide. We enjoyed ourselves so much that Rev. VanderVelde and I resumed our tour of historical Edinburgh the next day. If

you have ever been up top in a double-decker bus, you know what a grand view exists from there.

We found the number of rifts in the Scottish churches perplexing. How could so many changes develop in just two short years? Obviously the "Continuing" and "Majority" Free Churches had pre-existing problems which had only recently surfaced. The Canadian Reformed Churches through Synod Neerlandia 2001 maintain a relationship with the Free Church of Scotland while monitoring the developments with the Free Church of Scotland "Continuing." This method appears to be the best course of action for now. The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad is busy developing further communication with the churches in Scotland and in The Netherlands.

Trusting and Praying

There are some deep differences in the Scottish and Dutch churches. We wonder what purpose such developments might hold. We do know that the Lord God, in his providential care, controls all things and will use all things for his purpose. We may trust and also pray that the Lord will fulfil his purpose for his churches in other parts of the world also. Let us commit the brotherhood in the world into the care of our God.