

## Report of the Committee for Contact with the ERQ for the upcoming General Synod 2001

### INTRODUCTION

Esteemed brothers,

What follows is a report from the Committee for Contact with l'Église Réformée du Québec (abbreviated as ERQ). This committee was appointed for the first time by Synod 1995 and summarized its findings in a Report to General Synod Fergus 1998. Synod 1998 decided to continue the work of the committee, giving it a revised mandate. It appointed the following people as members of the committee: the Revs. P.G. Feenstra (convener) and A.J. Pol (secretary), and the brs. J. Boot and W. Oostdyk.

### MANDATE

The mandate given by General Synod Fergus 1998 was:

1. To clarify and discuss the points raised in Consideration B in view of the concerns raised by the churches;
2. To keep the churches informed about the ERQ so that they may be able to respond to financial and other needs of the ERQ;
3. To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity, and liturgy;
4. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Synods of the ERQ;
5. To serve Synod 2001 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

In "Considerations B" the following was stated:

From the observations and concerns expressed by the churches it is evident that the following areas need further clarification and should remain topics of discussion:

1. The nature and status of the deacons and deaconesses;
2. The matter of liturgical forms, order of worship, supervision of the pulpit and Lord's Day observance;
3. The fencing of the Lord's Table and possible different practices among the various congregations;
4. The need of confessional binding for members and office bearers;
5. The differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the ERQ and the CanRCs;
6. The question whether federative unity is possible or not.

### OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The committee met seven times (September 22, 1998, December 8, 1998, February 23, 1999, May 12, 2000, May 23, 2000, June 9, 2000, June 21, 2000). All of the committee members attended these meetings. Two of these meetings (May 12, 2000 and June 9, 2000) took place with two delegates from the ERQ present, namely the Revs. J.G. deBlois and J. Zoellner.

<sup>1</sup>Acts of General Synod Fergus, ON - 1998, pages 92-93.

<sup>2</sup>Acts of General Synod Fergus, ON - 1998, pages 92-93

The *Acts of Synod Fergus* were sent to the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the ERQ in October, 1998. Since there was no official response from this committee for some time, our work came to a standstill. This was mainly due to internal difficulties within the ERQ. During this time we were advised not to attend the Synods of the ERQ since most matters were being dealt with in closed session. Rev. P.G. Feenstra attended a Synod of the ERQ in November of 1999 and was given opportunity to extend greetings (A report was published in *Clarion* Vol 49 Number 1 and is included in an appendix).

On June 28, 1999, the Inter-Church Relations Committee of l'Église Réformée du Québec (composed of the Revs. J.G. deBlois and J. Zoellner) gave the following response to the decision of Fergus 1998:

"The Synod of the Église Réformée du Québec thankfully acknowledges the Canadian Reformed Churches' expressed desire to be of assistance to us and appreciates that the issues raised by Synod Fergus 1998 are important and legitimate. Considering that some of the same issues have been raised by our local consistories will need to be discussed within the ERQ; and that other observations and concerns expressed by Synod Fergus 1998 are not of present concern to us; therefore,(1) it is recommended that the ERQ begin its own synodical discussions in order to clarify the concerns of our local consistories which have also been raised by the Canadian Reformed Churches; and

(2) that our Synod ( through its Inter-Church Relations Committee) advise the Canadian Reformed Committee for Contact with the ERQ that the items of discussion raised by Synod Fergus 1998 which are neither current nor urgent within the ERQ be dealt with if and when they are raised by our local consistories."

It took some time before mutually convenient arrangements could be made for further contact with the brothers from the ERQ.

In preparation for further contact, we asked the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the ERQ if they could provide us with further information regarding the points raised by Synod Fergus 1998. They did this in a letter dated April 17, 2000, from which we quote the following:

"We have gone through all of our Minutes and have come up with the following list. We enumerate the points as they were raised by your Synod, May 18, 1998, pp. 92-93:

(1) At the June 1998 ERQ Synod meeting, we revised our Church Order ( point 4.2.5.) by removing the phrase " and the deacons ". No other changes concerning deacons have been made or are proposed.

(2) At the June 1999 ERQ Synod, it was proposed ( minute 5.2.3.) that the Committee of Ministry examine the question of who may preach in our pulpits and under what conditions. We are awaiting this report. Previously, our Education Committee submitted a study proposing liturgical forms for the ERQ, but this report was not received, the Committee's mandate was not renewed, and therefore this subject is not under study.

(3) The question of the fencing of the Lord's Supper and possible different practices among various congregations has not been raised within the ERQ.

- (4) The issue of criteria for membership has been raised and is presently under study by our Ministry Committee. We are awaiting this report.
- (5) Concerning the issue of rules for ecclesiastical fellowship: despite our Inter-church Relations Committee report of Canadian Reformed concerns regarding our rules, no motion to review these rules was proposed.
- (6) The question of federative unity was never an ERQ objective. The ERQ's interest has always been limited to denominational fellowship."

The items raised in this letter formed a point of departure for the first meeting with these delegates on May 12, 2000. Further discussions took place on June 9, 2000. What follows is a summary of observations. We begin with their explanation concerning their procedure with regard to matters raised by Synod Fergus 1998. What follows after this is their response to the subjects that Synod Fergus mandated the Canadian Reformed committee for Contact with the ERQ to focus on for clarification and discussion.

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

### *Explanation concerning procedure*

The delegates from the ERQ explained that there were several reasons for not deciding to deal directly with the issues raised by Synod Fergus. Their standpoint is that matters to be discussed at Synod should be raised by at least one of the member congregations first. There was also the concern that if time and energy would be put into all the matters raised by Synod Fergus it would not mesh with what the ERQ sees as priorities, given their local tasks and responsibilities, and limited manpower.

### *Mandate I*

The first item of the mandate in *Acts General Synod Fergus, ON 1998* refers to six points under "IV Considerations B" that are to be clarified and discussed in view of the concerns raised by the churches.

*I The nature and status of the deacons and deaconesses.*

At the June 1998 ERQ Synod meeting, their Church Order point 4.2.5 was revised by removing the phrase "and the deacons."

Clarification regarding this revision was requested. What are the implications of this decision in view of Article 2.4? What are the nature and status of the deacons? Point 2.4.3 states that "The parish can call to the office of deacon *all members* who show evidence of their competence . . ." Does this also include women?

Regarding point 2.4.3: Although women have never been ordained in the office of deacon, they could serve as deaconesses. If there would be a deaconess in the ERQ she would work under the supervision of elders. Only the elders exercise pastoral care and have disciplinary oversight. Deacons are also under their supervision. This has been made clear by the revision of 4.2.5. Article 4.2.1 also makes it clear that the deacons are not part of the local council.

The ERQ wants to emphasize the ministry of all believers. This is related to the missiological context of Roman Catholicism, where the lay people have no real function. There is the need to have women ministering to other women. In Quebec, the relationship between men and women is often a problem. There are many situations of single women or women separated from their spouses. The system as it exists now guards against women having authority. It was stated: "We acknowledge the principles involved. We are also trying to ensure that women are able to use their gifts in faithfulness to Scripture."

2        *The matter of liturgical forms, order of worship, supervision of the pulpit and Lord's Day observance.*

\* *Liturgical forms:* The Education Committee of the ERQ submitted a study to Synod proposing liturgical forms for the ERQ, but this report was not received and the committee's mandate was not renewed. This subject is not under study at present. The delegates from the ERQ did, however, indicate that the study of this matter will be taken up again in the future.

\* *Order of worship:* The matters of liturgical forms and the order of worship were discussed with the delegates from the ERQ on May 12, 2000. In the ERQ each church does have a certain liturgical order and there are forms that are in use. However, they have not been officially approved by Synod. There is principial homogeneity in terms of how things are done. The principles are maintained and taught according to the confessions. In practice there is diversity as to how those principles are put into practice.

Because the congregations are small, there is the opportunity for congregation members to participate in prayer during the worship services. This is seen as an expression of the office of all believers under the oversight and authority of the elders. There is also the awareness that the larger you become, the less participatory you can be. With larger numbers, more organization and structure become necessary.

\* *Supervision of the pulpit:* At the June 1999 ERQ Synod, it was proposed (minute 5.2.3) that the Committee of Ministry examine the question of "who may preach in our pulpits and under what conditions." They are awaiting this report. At present, it is left to the responsibility of the local council as to who is allowed to preach.

\* *Lord's Day observance:* Some explanation regarding this can be found on page 8 of the "Report to General Synod Fergus 1998" from the Committee for Contact with the ERQ. Reference is made to the Westminster Confession (Art. XXI.8), which highlights the principle of keeping the Lord's day "holy unto the Lord." This not only involves refraining from "worldly employments and recreations" but also devoting the day to "public and private exercises of worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy."

The delegates from the ERQ indicated that one of the challenges for the ERQ is how to make the whole day special, aside from having the worship service from Sunday to Sunday. There is much learning to be done, especially by new converts, as

to how to do this. As one of the delegates put it: "We challenge people to make changes." In many of the churches there is not only the worship service but also hours of further interaction, including much conversation and instruction as well as a meal together.

### *3 The fencing of the Lord's Table and possible different practices among the various congregations.*

On page 13 of the Committee Report to General Synod Fergus 1998, a description is given as to what takes place in the congregations of the ERQ. "The invitation is addressed to all who repent and believe in the Gospel of salvation, and who are engrafted into Christ by faith and live accordingly."

In our meeting with the brothers of the ERQ it was asked if this was consistent with what the ERQ Church Order stipulates concerning the members of the church in Chapters 5 and 6. In Article 5.1 reference is made to professing members who "have *publicly professed their faith* before the elders and the ministers of the Word and before the Church, and who are, *as a consequence*, accepted to share *fully* in the community of the church." Article 5.2 speaks of preparing children "to enter into the *full communion* of the Church *by profession of their faith*." Article 6.1.10 speaks of "repeated warnings by the local council, and the suspension of the *right* to participate in the Holy Supper." Is it appropriate to have what seems to be one standard for church members and another more open approach to those who are not members of the local church?

The question the ERQ delegates raised in response to this was: "Is there not a different responsibility with respect to members and non-members?" The members of the ERQ are under the supervision of the office bearers. This oversight is not exercised over other people. The delegates stated that the following procedure is followed in their local church, "We explain the gospel, highlighting how we understand it. There is a warning that the sacrament is for believers only. The invitation is addressed to all who are baptized believers and entitled to partake of the sacrament in the churches of which they are members." They also stated that the procedure is not the same in every local congregation. There is no disagreement in the ERQ on whether or not the table should be supervised. The question is how this is to take place. In this context the statements of Synod Fergus 1998 concerning fencing of the Lord's table were discussed.

### *4 The need for confessional binding for members and office bearers.*

In Article 6.2.1 of the ERQ Church Order, it is stated that "Spiritual discipline applies to elders and to ministers of the Word as to other members of the Church." This seems to imply confessional binding. How is this made explicit in the life of the church? What is the present practice with respect to admitting members to becoming professing members of the church? How do the office bearers of the ERQ satisfy themselves that prospective professing members and office bearers do wholeheartedly agree with the confessions of the ERQ and submit to the supervision and discipline of the church?

In an e-mail dated April 17, 2000, the Revs. Zoellner and deBlois indicated that "The issue of criteria for membership has been raised and is presently under study by our Ministry Committee. We are awaiting this report."

The delegates from the ERQ promised to bring our questions to the attention of this Committee.

*5 The differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the ERQ and the CanRCs.*

The ERQ proposed a different set of rules in 1997 than what we had in 1992.

The delegates from the ERQ gave the following information as to why these rules have been formulated somewhat differently.

Article 1 highlights the importance of mission for the ERQ and expresses a willingness to help each other in the matter of advancing the cause of the gospel.

The difference between the terms “worship” in the ERQ rules and “liturgy” in the CanRC rules is not substantive.

*6 The question of whether federative unity is possible or not?*

This question was already addressed on pages 18-19 of the Committee Report to General Synod Fergus 1998. As a further explanation it was pointed out that being part of another church would not be in the best interests of the development of the ERQ. In terms of mission, culture, background and history, there are many differences. Missiologically, Scripturally and practically, it was felt that it would be desirable to take the best of what could be found in other Reformed churches and develop that in an indigenous ministry in Quebec.

**Mandate 2**

*To keep the churches informed about the ERQ so that they may be able to respond to financial and other needs of the ERQ.*

To date, our committee has not received specific requests for financial help or for help regarding other needs on the part of the ERQ. Help is requested through the news bulletin. Last year the CanRC gave \$21,000. So far this year \$15,000 has come in, not counting help given through the church of Owen Sound.<sup>31</sup>

When questioned as to whether there is any way in which we as a committee can help the ERQ beyond the help already being given in response to ERQ newsletters to churches and members of our federation, and the help given through the church at Owen Sound, it was stated that at this moment this is not necessary. An unexpected corporate gift and the fact that support to the church of Trois Rivieres is not necessary have led to a surplus at this moment.

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<sup>31</sup>The church at Owen Sound has responded to a specific request from the ERQ church in St. Georges de Beauce to assist them in developing church life. Rev. Paulin Bedard has been called by the church as second minister. With the generous assistance of several churches and individual donors the church at Owen Sound has coordinated both financial and spiritual support for this project. An article appeared in *Clarion*, Volume 49 Number 1 explaining the nature of this work (see Appendix). Rev. Bedard spent three months in Owen Sound to become familiar with our churches. He attended consistory meetings, catechism classes, and a study weekend. The church at St. Georges de Beauce gave Rev. Bedard a list of twenty-four questions on matters for which they sought assistance from the church at Owen Sound. These were answered in respective meetings with the deacons, elders, and minister. Rev. Bedard also went on a speaking tour in the churches of Classis Northern and Central Ontario.

**Mandate 3**

*To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity, and liturgy.*

There are no specific requests on such matters to which we can respond. But as things develop, input would be appreciated.

**Mandate 4**

*To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Synods of the ERQ.*

No specific invitations to attend have been extended. However it was stated that delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches are welcome to come at any meeting. Synods are held on the third weekend of September, November, March and June. There is a formalized agenda, but it does not specify the details of what would be dealt with.

**Further help**

The brothers of the ERQ expressed the hope that even though Ecclesiastical Fellowship may not materialize at this time there would be an "interim relationship" whereby we would continue to assist them in their work of mission. As Committee we would like to pass this on to the Canadian Reformed Churches. We propose that this be done by broadening point 3 of our previous mandate to include assistance in the development and advancement of mission, as expressed in the "Rules 1997" of the ERQ. This, however, should be done in response to a request on the part of the ERQ for such assistance, whereby they indicate the nature and parameters of the help required. The brothers of the ERQ also expressed that if a suitable candidate would be found he could be examined by the CanRC's prior to providing support.

**EVALUATION**

There were six points listed under "IV Considerations B" on page 92 of the *Acts General Synod Fergus, ON 1998*. Your committee has come to the following evaluation.

*The nature and status of the deacons and deaconesses.*

The ERQ does not have female deacons, although in its Church Order (the "Order and Discipline of the ERQ," abbreviated as "ODE") it is apparent that women could potentially function as such. However, the ODE of the ERQ stipulates that the deacons do not make up part of the ruling council of the church. To make this principle clear, an inconsistency in the ODE on this point has been eliminated in a recent revision of its ODE made by its Synod. Now that they have made this revision it is even more clear than before that the ERQ does not wish to have women participate in a position of oversight over the church.

The ERQ acknowledges what is written by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:12, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." The fact that the CRC has opened the offices to women has even been a reason for the ERQ to terminate the relationship with the CRC.

*The matter of liturgical forms.*

The delegates from the ERQ have stressed that there is principal homogeneity in terms of how things are done in their churches, even though there is diversity in practice.

We can explain the importance of using common, adopted liturgical forms in all the churches and encourage their use. However, as long as there is indeed principal homogeneity, the existence of diverse practices should not form an impediment to ecclesiastical fellowship.

*Order of worship*

The ERQ has no formal synodical decision regarding an order of worship. In comparing this with our situation, we must remember that our *Book of Praise* page 581 gives no prescription by synod either. It simply describes what is "commonly used."

During the worship services there is more freedom for input in congregational prayers by members of the ERQ. This is related to the fact that the congregations are still very small. Although it was acknowledged that congregational input could lead to a disorderly situation, this does not seem to be a problem at this point in time.

*Supervision of the pulpit*

The June 1999 Synod of the ERQ gave the mandate to a Committee of Ministry to examine the question of "who may preach in our pulpits and under what conditions." We can only await what is reported and what a future synod of the ERQ may decide on this matter.

*Lord's Day observance*

Although there is only one worship service, this is not because of a lack of interest in devoting the day to worship and fellowship. It is clear that the ERQ strives to maintain the Lord's Day as a special day. As indicated above, in many of the churches there is not only the worship service but there are also hours of further interaction, including much conversation and instruction as well as a meal together.

*Fencing the Lord's Table and Confessional membership; and*

*The need for confessional binding for members and office bearers*

It must be remembered that no official position has been adopted regarding these matters. The discussions with the delegates indicate that further interaction is needed. This may help the ERQ to consider the various aspects relating to these matters and to come to an official position.

*The differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the ERQ and the CanRCs.*

This matter has been sufficiently dealt with. We should consider honouring the emphasis they put on mission as expressed in their "Rules 1997" by broadening the mandate "to respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity, and liturgy" to include mission.

*The question whether federative unity is possible or not.*

The delegates from the ERQ have highlighted the differences of history, language, and culture, as well as the different context in which the ERQ works. They do not see forming one federation with English-speaking churches as a necessity or even as desirable. They wish to remain autonomous. They do, however, value interaction and cooperation with the CanRCs and hope that it would even be possible for the CanRCs to sponsor mission work in conjunction with the ERQ in Quebec. Your committee is of the opinion that we should accept the desire of the ERQ to function independently and not pursue the matter of federative unity further.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Your committee recommends that Synod decide the following:

- A. To note with gratitude that the ERQ strives to be faithful to the Word of God and to bring the Reformed confessions and church order to expression in its own context.
- B. In order to continue developing closer ties with the ERQ with a view to Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Synod re-appoint the Committee for contact with the following mandate:
  1. To continue discussions in particular regarding the matter of confessional membership and fencing of the Lord's table.
  2. To discontinue discussion on the matter of federative unity and differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
  3. To encourage the churches to continue supporting the ERQ financially when needed.
  4. To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity, liturgy, and mission.
  5. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Synods of the ERQ.
  6. To serve Synod 2004 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Rev. P.G. Feenstra (chairman)  
 Rev. A.J. Pol (secretary)  
 J. Boot;  
 W. Oostdyk

## REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR CONTACT WITH THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH TO THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES TO BE HELD IN NEERLANDIA, AB IN 2001

### I Introduction

After General Synod Fergus 1998 the task of the Committee for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (CCOPC) was limited. In the present situation the contact between our churches consists mainly of communications between the General Assembly of the OPC and the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches. We could do little more than conveying the decisions of Synod Fergus to the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR) for consideration by the General Assembly, and returning the response from the Assembly of the OPC to Synod Neerlandia, with some recommendations.

### II Decisions of Synod Fergus 1998 re. the contacts with the OPC

Synod appointed Rev. J. DeGelder, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, br. G.J. Nordeman and br. G. VanWoudenberg as members of the CCOPC, which became a subcommittee of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas. The CCOPC was instructed

**Appendix A**  
**Regarding the ERQ**  
**St. Georges de Beauce – Owen Sound**  
***A developing relationship***

Two years ago our local congregation expressed a strong desire not only to fulfill the missionary calling of the church in a foreign land but also within our beloved country of Canada. As a result, a “mission committee” was established and met for the first time in August 1998. The Committee was instructed to look at the possibility of starting a new project or supporting one that already existed. Two areas of work were suggested: Northern Ontario or Quebec. The province of Quebec was given priority. The Committee was instructed to see if there was any way of helping the l’Église Réformée du Québec in their work of mission.

*A request from St. Georges*

In the process of doing this work a request was received from the ERQ church in St. Georges de Beauce (located approximately one-and-one-half hours south of Quebec City). They asked if we were willing to support the calling of a second minister who would help develop Reformed church life within the congregation. This is an area where there is a great need within the ERQ in general. Rev. Paulin Bedard was called by the congregation and he accepted the call on the condition that financial support would be forthcoming. Whereas their present minister, Rev. Mario Veilleux, will concentrate on evangelism, the emphasis in Rev. Bedard’s work will be on a teaching ministry (training elders, catechism classes, translating Reformed material etc.). Yet there will be some flexibility in the division of the workload.

By far the majority of the members in the church at St. Georges de Beauce, and all the congregations in the ERQ, are very new to the faith. The congregation is small (35 communicant and 30 non-communicant members, plus about 20 other participants who as yet have not professed their faith). Presently they are self-supporting. Yet the addition of a second pastor will require additional resources. As they wrote to us, “According to the experience of Rev. Paulin Bedard and the ERQ scale of wages for ministers, an annual amount of \$43,000 is needed.”

In their letter to us the consistory of St. Georges also wrote:

During the last few years, we have been encouraged and stimulated by the development of relationships between the Canadian Reformed Churches and l’Église Réformée du Québec, through many personal contacts and also through the work of our synodical committees. Our consistory believes that we can learn a lot through these contacts and that the Lord gives us opportunity to be a source of fraternal encouragement to each other. We see the usefulness and importance to deepen these relationships and promote them on a local level, between a CanRC congregation and an ERQ congregation. It is the reason why we approach you and present to you our project, so that you may pray more specifically for us and know our needs.

During the first week of August 1999, a delegation from Owen Sound was sent to meet with the consistory of St. George and to visit the congregation for a weekend. They found among the brothers and sisters a sincere desire to serve the Lord in a Reformed manner and an eagerness to learn more about church life in our federation. Many things we take for granted need to be developed in these young churches.

## Acceptance of the invitation

As a result of this visit the consistory of Owen Sound decided to pursue this project provided:

1. Rev. Bedard spends approximately three months in the Owen Sound area to become familiar with the overall functioning of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
2. St. Georges sends a delegation to our church on a yearly basis.
3. A delegation is sent from Owen Sound to St. Georges to review their situation.
4. This contact draws us closer together as church federations.
5. Financial help is received from other congregations (and individuals) in our federation.

The church in St. Georges has agreed to pursue this course of action.

We believe this project is very much in line with the recommendations of Synod Fergus. We hope that through this type of contact the ERQ will learn and have a better understanding about us as Canadian Reformed Churches and we about them.

### *Visit on November 19-21, 1999*

Last November I was given opportunity to visit the Reformed Churches in Quebec. I attended on behalf of the Committee for Contact with l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec and because of the contacts we have been developing between our local congregation in Owen Sound and the church at St. Georges de Beauce.

### *The ERQ Synod November 19-20*

On Friday evening I attended the Synod that was held in Charny at the Institut Farel. Seven brothers were present as delegates. They were: Rev. David Craig, Jean Zoellner, Ruben Kwint, Mario Veilleux and the elders Yves Bergeron, Patrice Michaud and Luc Thibaudeau. Rev. Paulin Bedard was present as an observer. The atmosphere was more relaxed than our major assemblies tend to be. For example, observers were given opportunity to ask questions and questions were directed at them. Voting, however, is done only by the delegates. The chairman of the meeting was elder Patrice Michaud. He led the meeting in a very impressive and efficient manner keeping everyone in line (including the ministers)!

The following morning the delegates returned at 8:30 a.m. Rev. Jean-Guy DeBlois arrived having just returned from attending the meeting of NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council). He was not seated as a delegate because there were already two delegates from the congregation in Montreal. The first hour-and-a-half was spent in devotion, song and prayer. Rev. Ruben Kwint gave an extensive meditation on Ecclesiastes 7:16.

During the meeting of the Synod every church was given opportunity to report on matters pertaining to their local church. The joys and the difficulties of the churches were expressed. Two of the six churches, Trois-Rivieres and Quebec City, are without elders. The minister of Quebec City, Francois Cordey, has been given a leave of absence due to health problems. Several churches indicated that they are already or are planning to use catechism material that has been translated and adapted by Rev. Bedard.

The project of support for St. Georges de Beauce received considerable attention at the Synod. It was agreed that the first 75% of the funds collected would be for local work in St. Georges and that the remaining 25% would be used for work Rev. Bedard would be doing for Institut Farel (teaching and developing courses for the Internet). It was also stressed that the salary schedule as used for ministers in the ERQ be used.

At this point in the meeting I was given opportunity to address the delegates and to pass on greetings on behalf of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas and on behalf of Owen Sound.

#### *Committee Reports*

Several Committees gave an oral report of their work. The Committee for Inter-church relations now consists of two men, Rev. DeBlois and Rev. Zoellner. They informed the brothers that they had passed on to our Committee the decision made by the June Synod of the ERQ. In reaction to the decision of Synod Fergus 1998 the June Synod of the ERQ decided,

The Synod of the Eglise reformee du Quebec thankfully acknowledges the Canadian Reformed Churches' expressed desire to be of assistance to us and appreciates that the issues raised by Synod Fergus 1998 are important and legitimate. Considering that some of the same issues have been raised by our local consistories; and that other observations and concerns expressed by Synod Fergus 1998 are not of present concern to us; therefore, (1) it is recommended that the ERQ begin its own synodical discussions in order to clarify the concerns of our local consistories which have also been raised by the Canadian Reformed Churches; and (2) that our Synod (through its Inter-Church Relations Committee) advise the Canadian Reformed Committee for Contact with the ERQ that the items of discussion raised by Synod Fergus 1998 which are neither current nor urgent within the ERQ be dealt with if and when they are raised by our local consistories.

Rev. DeBlois reported on his visit to the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. He attended as an observer and found it would benefit the ERQ if they would apply for membership. As an observer he was given ample time to present the situation of the ERQ.

There was considerable discussion on the work of the committees appointed by the ERQ Synods and the usefulness of the work that was done. Reference was made to an extensive report on liturgical forms that had been prepared by the Committee for Education which was defeated and never picked up again. A discussion was also held on the possibility of Synod employing an individual for work in the ERQ. This discussion came about because Ben Westerveld (formerly of the CRC in Dunville, ON and now a member of the OPC) is presently living in Quebec and hopes to receive a call from one of the churches in the future. In the meantime he is being supported by OPC members. Apparently the donators need receipts and the only legal way this can be done is when Ben can prove that he is employed by the ERQ. In this debate it became evident that there is some tension as to which model of church government should be followed (Presbyterian or Reformed). Is it possible for a synod to be the employer of an individual or should this be done on a local level?

*Sunday worship*

On Sunday I attended the worship service in St. Georges de Beauce. Rev. Mario Veilleux read three passages of Scripture (Genesis 39:7-9; Jeremiah 8:6; Romans 8:5-8) and on the basis of these texts spoke about how sin wrongs God in all his attributes (in his goodness, omniscience, wisdom, sovereignty and justice.) The mediator by which we must be saved must be God himself. The reason is because sin has done such infinite wrong to God.

After the service I was given opportunity to address the congregation. I passed on greetings from our local congregation and briefly spoke about our desire that the contact we have may draw us closer in the Lord and that we may be encouraged by what we receive in each other as Reformed Churches. The response of the congregation was overwhelming. My overall impression was that the congregation in St. Georges genuinely treasures the contact.

*In General*

The visit was very beneficial to get a better picture and understanding of the life of these young churches and to see it first hand in the life of the congregation at St. Georges. The people with whom I spoke are full of eagerness and enthusiasm for the service of the Lord. Most of them did not grow up in a Reformed home and are eager to learn more of what it means to live as Reformed Christians in all areas of life. On more than one occasion I heard the phrase "You have such a rich heritage!" The blessings of Reformed church life which we tend to take for granted are valued as a new-found treasure. It was refreshing and a reason for great joy and thankfulness to see how the Lord also preserves his church in Quebec.

*Financial Support*

We are responding to financial and other needs of the ERQ (Synod Fergus, Article 97V C 2). We have asked the churches in Classis Northern Ontario to support this work either as an item on their church budgets, through collections or through the diaconry. We are hoping to have Rev. Bedard and his family come to the Owen Sound area as of March 1, 2000. The amount that will be needed will be approximately \$45,000. We are now soliciting funds from any individual or church that wishes to support this project. Please make your cheques payable to the "Owen Sound Canadian Reformed Church" and indicate it is for "Project Quebec." Individual donations of \$10 or more will be given a tax receipt. If we receive more support than we need to support this project we will pass it on to the ERQ. If you have any further questions please feel free to write us.

As local consistory we are very thankful for this opportunity to be of assistance to these brothers and sisters and in the process, to be enriched in faith and in our common desire to serve the Lord in the future. We pray that the Lord may continue to bless the developing relationship between the congregations of St. Georges and Owen Sound so that it benefit all the churches in the ERQ and draw us closer together as church federations.

P.G. Feenstra