

Conference, Rev. A. de Jager gave the following impression, "At the previous Conference (Langley, 1989) the process of getting to know one another clearly played a major role. We had to grow towards one another and this brought along with it some confrontation and a questioning of one another. The attitude of this Conference was more: we have to start working things out and must really progress with each other."

Of course, there were still differences apparent. Rev. de Jager admitted that "we are still not finished discussing the basis," but added, "we clearly wanted to get away from the tension which this still caused in Langley."

I believe that Rev. de Jager is correct in his assessment. The ICRC is now past the stage of infancy and is entering a new phase where the emphasis comes to lie more on mutual help. The ICRC will still continue to discuss basic points of disagreement, but the main direction will be towards further cooperation and support, especially for churches from the Third World.

The inevitable question will be asked, "What is now the concrete benefit of such a conference as the ICRC?" The immediate results of all these personal and ecclesiastical contacts can not be easily measured. It takes time to build a city, and small steps are then quite significant.

It became apparent that the smaller Reformed and Presbyterian churches from impoverished areas in the world were greatly encouraged and edified by the fellowship experienced in the Conference. Let me quote Rev. Mohan Chaco of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India, a delighted observer, who spoke moving words, "We need encouragement and direction, because we are a small group and geographically isolated. This Conference has been a great help to us." I believe that Rev. Chaco echoed the feeling of all delegates and observers.

### **Blessed are the peacemakers**

Also through this Conference, the churches can fulfill their ecumenical task: to stand together in a wicked world and to share the gifts of Jesus Christ. Then we are mutually enriched.

Let me conclude this report with a quote from the speech by my former professor and mentor, J. Kamphuis, "Now that we see in our time so much faith destroyed and secularization making swift progress, the ICRC can be a priceless means, a good instrument, a striking symbol of the communion of saints, which does not allow error, but within which there is communal life from Christ's peace – the peace which surpasses all understanding and which can keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. If one word of our Saviour can direct our community of churches, it is what Christ said to His disciples in the sermon on the mount: blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

The 1993 ICRC at Zwolle was, indeed, a gathering of true peacemakers.

Cl. Stam  
Hamilton, September 30, 1993

**APPENDIX 4**  
**MEETING OF THE DELEGATES OF**  
**THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KOREA (KOSIN)**  
**AND THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

During the ICRC at Zwolle, the delegates from the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK-Kosin) and the Canadian Reformed Churches took time for a special meeting. The reason for this meeting was to formalize the fraternal relationship between these two churches. Synod Lincoln 1992, decided to accept the invitation of the PCK-Kosin to enter into a full sister church relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Synod also decided to mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad "to formalize this relationship in a manner satisfactory to both federations" (Acts, Art. 111. IV. B.2).

It seemed best to formalize this relationship at the ICRC, thus cutting costs and reducing the workload of the Committee. The meeting was arranged for September 2, 1993. For Canada were present: Rev. Cl. Stam, Dr. J. Visscher and Mr. H.A. Berends (along with the advisors Dr. J. Faber, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, and Rev. M. van Beveren). The Korean churches were represented by Dr. Soon Gil Hur and Dr. Kum Sang Lee.

Dr. Visscher opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. He addressed the Korean deputies with words of thankfulness for the fraternal relationship which has come about. He presented to the Korean brethren a copy of the latest edition of the *Book of Praise* and a copy of the publication *Inheritance Preserved*, written by Rev. W.W.J. VanOene. In this way the Koreans can further acquaint themselves with the history and practice of our Canadian Reformed Churches.

Dr. S.G. Hur responded on behalf of the Korean churches. He expressed gratitude that after 20 years of contact a relationship has finally been established. He sees in this development the hand of God.

The Korean churches invited a delegate to attend their General Assembly to be held later in 1993. Since this cannot be realized at this time, it was agreed that a Canadian delegation may be sent at a later date.

A brief discussion followed on the question how to make this new relationship as fruitful and possible, despite differences in language and culture. It was felt that meaningful contact can be pursued, for example, via the Theological Colleges of the two churches. It was noted that the Korean churches have contact with two Presbyterian Korean churches in Toronto, who are affiliated with an American-Korean Presbyterian denomination made up of immigrants from Korea, many of whom are former Kosin members. It was also agreed that the Kosin churches will send extra copies of an existing brochure about the history and life of the Presbyterian Church in Korea. Some discussion took place about the church struggles in Korea among Presbyterians (e.g. the controversy with the Presbyterian Hap-Dong church).

Information is exchanged about the next General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, to be held, the Lord willing, in 1995, in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

The delegates of both churches will report to their major assemblies on this meeting.

Dr. S.G. Hur closed the meeting with thanksgiving to the Lord. The meeting then went outside to pose for a photograph which would be taken home by each delegation.

For the Committee  
Cl. Stam

mean organizing too many conferences with too much cost and not enough effectiveness? Who will edit and publish the "newsletter"? I personally felt that I, as Canadian delegate, did not have a mandate to endorse such far-reaching proposals and could therefore not give the above my unqualified support.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the work of mission must have and will have an important place in the function of the ICRC. Cooperation in mission is a matter which requires our attention and support so that we can indeed help one another effectively in this world-wide venture. Our Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad will do wise to seek some direction in this matter from the next general synod.

### **Speakers and speeches**

A very important aspect of the ICRC, also at Zwolle, was the presentation and discussion of various papers by qualified speakers. Here is where the member churches can really get down to the basics of ecclesiastical contact, namely, to edify one another in the truth of God's Word.

For this Conference there was a list of respectable speakers with topics arranged mostly around the themes of *preaching* and *mission*. Here is the list of speakers and topics:

Drs. C.J. Haak (the Netherlands): Mission and the Wrath of God. Prof. W.N.S. Wilson (Ireland): Prophecy Today? Dr. N.H. Gootjes (Canada): Catechism Preaching; Rev. R. S. Ward (Australia): Recent Criticisms of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Drs. H.M. Ohmann (the Netherlands): Redemptive-Historical Preaching. Prof. J. Kamphuis (the Netherlands): Remarks on Church and Tolerance.

As stated earlier, the papers were presented during the evening sessions and discussed the next morning. Usually a very lively and enlightening discussion took place, not only during the meeting, but also during the breaks. I consider this to be one of the prime benefits of the Conference: to study common problems and issues which confront the member churches. Even if there is not always complete agreement on the topics, there still grows a better understanding of one another's positions. I was pleased to notice throughout the many debates the clear, whole-hearted commitment of all participants to the Word of God and the Reformed faith. It is refreshing and stimulating to work in such an atmosphere.

Since the papers will be published in the *Proceedings*, I will refrain from summarizing the contents in this report. But I do want to mention that each of these papers is filled with excellent material which ought to be considered as required reading in each Reformed family!

### **Introduction of observers**

It has become more or less a custom in the ICRC that delegates from observer churches are officially welcomed and given the opportunity to introduce themselves. These observers do not have the right to vote, but may participate in the discussions. I did not notice that this privilege was abused, for the many observers conducted themselves properly as guests.

Still, as the Conference grows, I think that this is one area where perhaps stricter rules might be formulated. After all, it should not happen that observers begin to dominate the discussions and influence the decisions, or use the ICRC as a free forum for their own ideas. The "open" format may have to be tightened.

It may happen that those who attend one Conference as observers, are present at the next Conference as delegates of churches requesting membership. Therefore it is good to include in this report a list of those churches who sent observers to the ICRC 1993: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland, Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka, Ely Presbyterian Church (Reformed, Cardiff, Wales), Reformed Churches in South Africa, Gereja-Gereja Masehi Musyafir (Indonesia), Iglesia Christiana de Fe



## **A surprise**

Later on they stated that they had received a Supplementary Report from the Dutch Deputies dealing with foreign churches. They added that they were going to propose to synod to approve the proposal of their Deputies to revise the rules of inter-church relations. In light of my presence they were also curious to know what the reaction to this proposal would be from the Canadian side. Seeing that our committee had not received this additional report, I could not comment until after I had read it. This I proceeded to do; however, it was not long before I sensed that this proposal for new rules had a rather familiar ring to it. I checked the report which the CRCA had sent to Synod Lincoln and discovered that what the Dutch Deputies were proposing to Synod Ommen was an almost exact translation of what the CRCA had proposed to Synod Lincoln. Needless to say, I could hardly object to this, especially not if one considers that for more than 10 years already we have been trying to establish common rules. I informed the advisory committee that from the Canadian Reformed Churches there would be no objections to their proposal, only appreciation.

In addition, I informed them that Synod Lincoln had taken the original proposal of the CRCA and made some changes to it. I explained these changes; however, they were not inclined to take them over. They preferred to stick with the original.

## **Various matters**

That evening synod met in plenary session and dealt with a draft response to a letter it had received from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (commonly called "Synodical"). Those readers who know their Dutch church history are aware that it was this church which disciplined and deposed office-bearers in 1940s who did not agree with its neo-Kuyperian pronouncements. They now offered an apology of sorts and wanted to establish closer ties.

Synod Ommen responded to this letter by saying that it saw little sense in starting some kind of a dialogue seeing that in the intervening years it had become very clear that the two churches were on different wave-lengths. All sorts of divergences from Scripture, confession and church order on the part of the Reformed Church (Synodical) undermine any possibility for fruitful contact.

Synod also dealt with a draft letter to be sent to the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament. That legislative body was considering a new anti-discrimination law which could have a very detrimental effect on the hiring practices of the churches and the schools, as well as on other Christian organizations.

The next day, May 13, started in the morning with an informal meeting with some members of the Dutch committee on inter-church relations, namely, with the Revs. A. DeJager and H. VanVeen, as well as with some visiting delegates: Rev. G. Ball of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Rev. D. MacDonald of the Free Church of Scotland, and Rev. N. Hoeflinger of the Reformed Church in the United States.

## **New rules**

That afternoon synod met again in plenary session and proceeded to deal with the proposed new rules for inter-church relations. After ample discussion, the defeat of a certain amendment, the proposal of the Advisory Committee was adopted unanimously by synod.

What do these new rules look like? The most pertinent part read as follows:

"When entering into sister church relationship with a foreign church, this shall be exercised according to the adopted rules. The goal of these rules shall be to insure that as Reformed churches we remain faithful to the Word of God, that we assist each other, and that we encourage each other to bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this world by word and deed.

our membership in the ICRC. . . . One of the concerns . . . about our continued membership in the ICRC is the matter of whether there is really 'unity of faith' in the ICRC."

The point here is whether we can admit churches into the ICRC with whom we do not yet have a sister church relationship and so recognize one another's membership, ministry, and sacraments. The FRCA see here an ethical problem, "If we cannot express the unity on the local scene, can we maintain that there is unity on the Conference level?" Since the FRCA have not resolved this issue for themselves, the delegates from the FRCA felt compelled to abstain from voting on membership requests.

The Conference simply took note of this statement. The concerns of the FRCA came up from time to time during the discussions on these and related constitutional matters.

Personally, I can understand the Australian concerns, which have also come up in our own discussions here in Canada. However, in our discussions, we have come farther in our understanding that churches of the two different Reformed and Presbyterian traditions do belong together and can also work together, as in the past also today, as long as their differences can be discussed in an open and brotherly manner.

The Canadian Reformed delegates, along with those of the PCK-Kosin, both sister churches of the FRCA, did upon request meet separately with the Australian brethren to discuss their concerns. The consensus among the delegates of the sister churches was quite clear: since the ICRC is a Conference which not only expresses the unity of faith but also seeks to promote this unity, and not some international synod, the member churches are not compromised when they receive churches into the Conference with whom they do not yet have a conclusive ecclesiastical relationship.

This is especially not the case when certain differences in doctrine and church polity have been clearly identified and defined ahead of time. It was felt that the expression, "the unity of faith," does not imply full agreement on each and every point of doctrine, but means (in terms of cooperation in the ICRC) a fundamental agreement in the Reformed faith as the required basis for brotherly discussion.

Hopefully the Australian delegates and churches will benefit from this "consensus" of the sister churches and will wholeheartedly continue their valued participation in the ICRC.

### **Report on "Theological Affirmation"**

At the 1989 Conference in Langley, B.C., a "Committee on Theological Confirmation" was appointed to take up a suggestion of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) "regarding an agreed statement as to what constitutes a true church and the consequences of such a statement for intercommunion etc." (Minutes 1989, page 53). Informed readers may recall that in 1989, the Canadian delegation abstained from voting on this proposal of the PCEA because the members of our delegation were divided on the issue. This abstention is recorded in the 1989 Minutes (page 56).

My fear at that time was that such an "agreed statement" about the church would become a super-confessional document (i.e. above and beyond the adopted standards), which could begin to lead a life of its own and cause more division than promote unity. What we confess concerning the church is already sufficiently summarized in our creeds and, in my view, no additional statement was required. Others felt, however, that this was an excellent opportunity through an agreed statement to "harmonize" the various traditions concerning the church.

Therefore, I was happy to read that this Committee on Theological Affirmation reported to the 1993 Conference that a separate statement about the church need not be drawn up because we have, indeed, in our respective standards a sufficient declaration on this point. Our Committee for Relations With Churches Abroad had already reported to Synod Lincoln 1992, that the report on Theological Affirmation "takes away any fears that there may have been about the ICRC attempting to come with a new statement about the church," and it now appears that this assessment is correct.

The Conference agreed with the conclusions of the Committee on Theological Affirmation.

exception of the Canadian Reformed greeting, Rev. A. DeJager was called upon to translate. He did a commendable job, although by the time the RCUS delegate stood up to make his address, he bowed out. Perhaps it was a good thing for him that he did, although I would have dearly loved to hear his translation of some of the quaint American expressions that came from the Rev. N. Hoeflinger. After each address, the Rev. Sliggers, as chairman of synod, responded in English on behalf of the Dutch churches.

### **The last day**

The next day, being Friday, May 14, was my last day at Synod Ommen. The time was spent meeting with the Advisory Committee and helping them to translate the preamble and conclusion of their new rules into proper English, as well as a letter of greetings that they asked me to pass along to the General Assembly of the FCS. Various other matters were dealt with in the afternoon and synod adjourned early for the week-end. Thus my brief stay in Ommen came to an end.

In summing up thus far, I must say that I was very well received by the synod. It is obvious that the Dutch churches continue to prize their close relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. For myself, I found the atmosphere at this synod to be a very hearty one. Quite a few of the members were at a synod for the first time. Quite a few of the elder members of synod were retired; however, I saw no evidence that their age adversely affected their performance. On the whole, it gave the impression of being a fairly united body and this was also reflected by the fact that most of its decisions were made in unanimous fashion.

Whether or not such a spirit would prevail throughout was impossible for me to predict. A number of decisions on contentious issues still had to be made. It is no exaggeration to say that Synod Ommen was saving the most difficult matters for last, but then that seems to be an almost standard approach at major ecclesiastical assemblies. (Next time, it's on to Scotland.)

## **A VISIT TO SCOTLAND**

(In the Year-End issue of *Clarion* the first part of my trip on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches was reported on. Here follows the concluding portion.)

### **On to Scotland**

Early on the morning of May 15, 1993, I left Hardenberg for Amsterdam and boarded a flight to Edinburgh on Air UK. The flight was uneventful, although I was shocked to see all the snow on the hills around Edinburgh. Apparently they had had a real torrential downpour the previous night and at the higher elevations it had turned to snow.

I was officially welcomed by Mr. Andrew Jack and his two sons. His father, Mr. Donald Jack, was the official organizer for the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, which had requested our churches to send a representative. I was then taken to the home of Professor Emeritus C. Graham, where I had lunch. That afternoon I tried to assist a son-in-law of Prof. Graham's in locating the Rev. J.J. Peterson of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (a man well-known to some of us as "Texas Jack"! ). Although we spent quite some time at the train station, we did not find him. We returned to the Graham residence where an excellent supper awaited us. Later that evening I was brought to my place of residence, the Ellwyn Hotel on Moira Terrace. The FCS is in the habit of lodging official delegates to their General Assembly at various hotels in the city at their own expense.

### **A Sunday in the Free Church**

I was picked-up the next morning for worship by Mr. A. MacDonald, an elder in one of the Edinburgh churches. Rev. Cl. Stam and I had made his acquaintance in 1990. Together we went to the Buccleugh and Greyfriars Free Church in central Edinburgh. At



*Korea:*

Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK-KOsin): Dr. Kum Sam Lee and Dr. Soon Gil Hur.

*Australia:*

Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA): Rev. C. Bouwman, Rev. C. Kleijn.  
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA): Rev. W.P. Gadsby, Rev. R.S. Ward.

*Indonesia:*

Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia: Rev. D.H. Doko.

*South Africa:*

Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (VGKSA): Mr. F. Hofsink, Rev. E.L. van'tFoort.  
Free Church in Southern Africa (FCSA): Rev. David S. Fraser, Rev. B.M. Taho.

*The Netherlands:*

Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (RCN-L): Rev. A. de Jager, Rev. H. van Veen (advisors: Prof. Dr. M. te Velde, Drs. J.C. Haak).

*Scotland:*

Free Church of Scotland (FCS): Prof. A.I. Macloed, Rev. C. Graham (advisors: Rev. D. MacDonald, Rev. I.R. MacDondald, Prof. A.C. Boyd).

*Ireland:*

Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCI): Rev. H. Cunningham, Prof. W.N.S. Wilson.  
Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPCI): Dr. R.C. Beckett, Rev. M.G. Johnston.

*North America:*

Canadian Reformed Churches: Rev. Cl. Stam, Dr. J. Visscher (advisors: Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Dr. J. Faber). Rev. M. van Beveren, Mr. H.A. Berends and Mr. J. van Vliet were also present from Canada on behalf of the organizing "interim committee."  
The four churches which were applying for membership were represented as follows:

*North America:*

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC): Rev. J.J. Peterson, Dr. R.B. Gaffin Jr. (Rev. G.I. Williamson, advisor).  
Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS): Rev. R. Grossman.  
Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA): Rev. C. Pronk, Rev. P. van derMeyden.

*India:*

The Free Church of Central India (FCCI): Rev. W. John.

Upon the proposal of the Interim Committee (the moderamen of the 1989 Conference) the following moderamen was declared elected:

Chairman: Rev. A. de Jager (RCN-L)  
Vice-chairman: Dr. S.G. Hur (PCK-Kosin)  
Corresponding secretary: Rev. M. van Beveren (CanRC)  
Recording secretary: Rev. W. Gadsby (PCEA)  
Treasurer: Mr. H.A. Berends (CanRC).

The chairman, Rev. A. de Jager (formerly also minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Neerlandia, Alberta), spoke appropriate words of welcome to all delegates and offered encouragement for the work of the Conference.

The Conference decided to meet according to the following schedule: 9.00 - 12.00 (morning session); 14.30 - 17.30 (afternoon session); 19.30 - 21.00 (evening session). One can easily see that this is a very busy schedule, resulting in long days for the participants.

format and has to be transferred. I was told that this would be done in the future and that then a copy could be ordered and sent. I hope that several copies can be purchased and that arrangements can be made for it to be shown in Canada in order to familiarize our people with the FCS.)

At the close of the evening, Rev. Petersen (who was now staying at the same hotel) and I were chauffeured back to the Ellwyn Hotel. Yes, you read right "chauffeured." From now on and for the duration of the Assembly, we are picked up every morning and brought back by a man in a black suit driving a black Ford limo. Another Free Church custom, it appears.

### **The Assembly begins its work**

At 10:00 a.m. the Assembly was convened in the St. Columba's Church situated on the historic Royal Mile (a road which runs from Edinburgh Castle to Holyrood Palace, in between one finds all kinds of ancient buildings: St. Giles – the church of John Knox, Knox House, where the Reformer was born, etc, and places: a cemetery where Adam Smith of Wealth of Nations fame is buried.)

Prof. C. Graham as the newly installed Moderator gave his address entitled, "The Two-Fold Ministry of the Church." It was a very interesting piece of work, especially because it contained a lot of history about the Free Church. In it Prof. Graham reminded his audience about the temporal and spiritual ministry of the church. He especially elaborated on the temporal or social ministry of the church in terms of its diaconal calling. He pointed to Thomas Chalmers and his work among the poor in Glasgow. He spoke about Chalmers' vision for Scotland in which he saw a church and school in every village. He emphasized the fact that social needs are the business of the church by going back to Moses, the Psalms, the Minor Prophets, the Lord Jesus in Luke 4, Paul and James. The Gospel, he said, must address the whole man in all of his needs.

After his address, the Assembly approved its customary letter of greeting and best wishes to the Queen.

### **Responding to the Canadian Reformed invitation**

The Reporter of the Ecumenical Relations Committee, the Rev. D. MacDonald, then took the floor. He spoke about his recent visit to the Netherlands and Synod Ommen, noting that the Dutch churches were giving considerable support to the Presbyterian Association of England (PAE), that the Rules for Sister Churches had been changed removing the last obstacles to a sister-church relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands-Liberated (GKN). He welcomed Dr. J.C. Andrews of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. He mentioned the upcoming ICRC. Finally, he welcomed the representative of the Canadian Reformed Churches and spoke briefly about our churches.

In the ensuing discussion, it became clear that the FCS is on record as wanting and striving for the unity of the church. It desires to see one church of Jesus Christ in Scotland based on and committed to the Westminster Standards. A member of the Assembly also stood up and publicly expressed appreciation to the Dutch churches for the support being given to the Presbyterian Association of England. Finally, a number of comments were made and questions were asked about the Canadian Reformed Churches to which the reporter responded.

Thereafter, the Proposed Deliverances were moved. Number 7 reads, "The General Assembly gladly accept a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, in terms of the Rules for such fellowship agreed by both denominations." It was adopted without dissent.

By its actions the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland officially received and responded positively to the invitation of General Synod Lincoln 1992 of the Canadian Reformed Churches. It means that as churches we now have an additional sister church, or church in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Needless to say this sister exhibits some differences due to her Scottish background, Presbyterian polity



yearly "Yearbook" is put out giving statistical information about the congregation. Again, a number of copies are here for your information. Perhaps it would be best if they were divided equally among the classes.

### **The question of the "true Church"**

Reviewing the Abstracts of the Minutes of your Classes and Synods, I would be remiss if I did not address a concern raised in your circles concerning our view of the "one true Church." You have shown a willingness to study that issue, although I am not aware what conclusions you have reached in this matter. I wish to assure you, however, that the position of the Canadian Reformed Churches is clearly stated in the Three Forms of Unity. Of particular significance are the articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession.

The Belgic Confession speaks in terms of true and false, rather than more or less pure. It also avoids the distinction of visible and invisible. I think it is safe to say that within our churches there is a recognition of the fact that there is an invisible aspect to the church. After all, man is limited in his vision, so no man can see the whole work of Christ. However, there is an unwillingness to speak of an invisible church as distinct from the visible church. The one catholic church of Jesus Christ becomes quite visible, and we can recognize it by the three marks of the preaching, sacraments and discipline. Where we see a group which answers to those three marks, then we see the catholic Church being gathered. The general contention within the Canadian Reformed Churches is that true churches should not be content to remain on their own, but should seek also organizational unity. That organizational unity must be sought especially at the regional and national level. On the international level we speak of sister churches. Thus, we are not satisfied to accept a sort of status quo where different reformed bodies agree to co-exist, even overlap. Unity of faith requires organizational unity, a unity which at the same time recognizes the autonomy of the local church. It is our hope that such greater unity can be achieved in Canada among the various faithful reformed bodies.

This position is very much in line with that of our sister churches in the Netherlands, as can be seen in their report as printed in your Abstract of 1989, pp. 27-31. Further, that is a position you yourself also seem to be pursuing, considering some of the remarks as found in your President's Report, (eg. Abstract 1986, p. 12, and efforts to work in cooperation with OPC (Abstract 1990, p. 128). (Cf. also Reformed Herald, January 1993, p. 3). Judging also from the remarks throughout your Constitution, and your concern to maintain the Reformed faith, it seems right to assume that also you are not ready to call everything that presents itself as Church truly "Church of the Lord Jesus Christ." It would seem to me that we are not that far apart from each other on this point, and that some more careful discussion would be mutually beneficial. Maybe as young sister we can be of some help to our older sister.

### **Conclusion**

Esteemed brothers, it is time to draw my comments to a close. I have prepared packages of information for you to take home, so you can become more familiar with the younger sister from Canada. Of some things there should be enough for everyone. Other items are less numerous, but there should be sufficient so that each classes should be able to take something home.

May the Lord bless you as you continue with your work as Synod, and may the Lord guide us in such a way that we can come to a more meaningful relationship, and truly live as sister churches, in the unity of faith for mutual upbuilding, but above all, to the glory of our great and gracious God. Thank You.

On behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches,  
Rev. Eric Kampen  
Minister of the Canadian Reformed Church  
at Port Kells, British Columbia.

Assembly took turns praying for the needs of the church and its task in the world. This was followed by the Report of Public Questions Committee. As the name suggests this Committee deals with public issues which are of particular concern to the life of the church and society. The Report of this Committee comments on and expresses dismay at the establishment of a national lottery, the erosion of the sanctity of the Lord's day, the increase in lawlessness. It also examined the role of the Deacons. At 12:00 noon the Assembly received a visit from the Lord High Commissioner who is the Queen's representative in Scotland. Accompanied by a large retinue of people, the Lord High Commissioner came and brought the greetings of the Queen to the Assembly. In a speech of about 10 minutes he made a number of fitting comments. In the afternoon the Assembly received representatives from a number of different organizations: the Trinitarian Bible Society, the Lord's Day Observance Society, and the FIEC. In addition, a report was received from the Welfare of Youth Committee. This Committee deals with such matters as Sabbath (Sunday) School, education, youth camps, and publications. (In 1992 there were 22 camps in various places in Scotland and England held under the auspices of the FCS. These camps attracted 660 campers. They form an increasingly active role in outreach to young people. The FCS also publishes a magazine for young people called *The Instructor*.) In the evening the Assembly dealt with a report from the Widow's and Orphans' Committee. This Committee sees to it that widows and orphans of ministers in the FCS are properly cared for.

After this it was on to the reception of more delegates. The Rev. F.A.G. MacDonald brought the greetings of the National Bible Society of Scotland.

Thereafter I received the floor. I first acted on behalf of the Dutch sister churches, translating and presenting to the Assembly the letter of the GKN. Finally, I spoke on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

I was followed by a representative of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland and of the British Evangelical Council. The latter is a loose organization of churches in England and Scotland who act together in matters of mutual concern.

After we had received the floor each speaker was presented with a copy of the newly published book, *Crown Him Lord of All*, edited by Cl. Graham. It should also be noted that earlier in the day I had been a guest at a special luncheon hosted by the Moderator.

### **More Assembly business**

Almost all of Thursday morning and afternoon were spent dealing with various petitions and reports. Petitions were received from a number of churches, presbyteries and ministers. The petitions dealt with local churches who wanted to merge, with churches wanting further financial support, with ministers wanting to be released or retained.

The reports that were dealt with had to do with the Training for the Ministry and other matters relating to the Free Church College.

In the evening the Assembly received the report of the Foreign, Overseas and Jewish Missions Board Committee, as well as representatives from the various mission fields of the FCS. Words of greeting were spoken by men from the mission fields in Peru, Southern Africa, India, North America, Israel and Eastern Europe.

(It should be mentioned that one of the ministerial representatives was a certain Rev. David Miller. Earlier already this young minister had stood up and spoke some very positive words about the need for Christian schooling in the FCS, as well as on the mission field. In doing so he paid tribute to a very beneficial but brief exposure that he had, to Christian schooling in a school operated by members of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia in Launceston, Tasmania. In later speaking to him it turns out that he had been a pupil of the Principal of our Teachers' College, Mr. T.M.P. VanderVen.)

### **The Assembly comes to a close**

The Assembly again convened at 9:00 a.m. for what was to be its last day. More reports dealing with nominations, assembly arrangements, records, and printing of

## APPENDIX 2

### ADDRESS TO THE SYNOD OF THE RCUS, MAY 24-28, 1993, HELD IN SUTTON, NE.

Esteemed members of the Synod:

It is an honour and privilege that I may address you this afternoon. As the first official observer sent to represent the Canadian Reformed Churches at one of your Synods you can understand that there is some trepidation on my part. Although much work has been done by the Church at Carman, there is no precedent for me to follow. In many ways my impressions will serve as a precedent. That places a particular burden upon. There is also personal trepidation from the fact that in a sense in this visit there is the visit of a younger sister to a much older sister. By this I mean that the RCUS has a long history in N.A., going back centuries, while the Canadian Reformed Churches are far more recent arrivals on the scene here in N.A. Twice I have spoken of personal trepidation. I also want to speak about personal thankfulness. Yes, there is a thankfulness that by being in your midst I may experience something of what we both confess in L.D. 21:54, namely, "that the Son of God, out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, defends and preserves for Himself by His Spirit and Word, in the unity of true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life." The Churches I represent have sent me here because in you they recognize that catholic church gathering work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire to have our unity in Christ come to a more clear expression. At this time, though we do not yet have an official relationship, on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches I extend our heartfelt greetings in the Name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Though some of you have had some contact with the Church at Carman, and Rev. Walker attended Synod Lincoln held in the fall of 1992, in general there may not be that much knowledge about the Canadian Reformed Churches. Allow me thus to give a brief introduction.

#### History

Historically, the Canadian Reformed Churches grew out of the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. You have become familiar with those churches due to your work in Zaire. After W.W. II many Dutch immigrants from those Churches came to Canada. At first, efforts were made to join the Christian Reformed Churches and the Protestant Reformed Churches. The CRC, however, insisted on siding with the so-called "Synodical Reformed Churches," which had bound the believers to unscriptural doctrines concerning baptism and the covenant, and which had rashly deposed ministers and elders for not holding the synodically approved view. The Protestant Reformed Church made a doctrinal pronouncement in the Declaration of 1950. To those of Liberated background this was basically a restatement of the error they had liberated themselves from in the Netherlands. Thus, the need was seen to institute faithful Reformed Churches.

The first church instituted was the Church at Coaldale, in southern Alberta, on April 16, 1950. At present, there are 40 Canadian Reformed Churches. Four American Reformed Churches, are associated with the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches. Our total membership at the end of 1992, including non-communicant members, stood at 13,536. At present, eleven churches are vacant.

#### Doctrinal Standards and Church Government

As for the doctrinal standards, the Churches subscribe to the three Ecumenical Creeds, and the Three Forms of the Unity, namely, the Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. Officebearers must sign a subscription form.

With respect to church government, the Church Order of Dort, adapted to the Canadian situation, is maintained. A prominent feature of Dort style church polity as compared to Presbyterian polity is the strong emphasis on the local church. There is no such



oppressed. Take the Disruption of 1843 when scores of ministers found themselves out on the street. The suffering in this land has been immense. Life has been hard. In many respects it is still a harsh life. Nevertheless, the Gospel is being proclaimed and there is a true witness to Jesus Christ and His Lordship. May God bless it in every possible way.

- g) Finally, I must express my appreciation for the warm hospitality that was extended to me everywhere I went. I took it not simply as a reflection on my person but on the churches that I represented. The climate of Scotland may at times be cold and forbidding, but no one can say that about the hearts of our brothers and sisters in the Free Church of Scotland.

J. Visscher

Thus, delegates would not be away from their home churches for too long a period of time. In that respect, it is more like a lengthy classis.

This particular Synod has to spend much time on the report by their committee on Constitutional Revision. In the discussion about that report it could be noticed that the RCUS Constitution is a blend of Reformed and Presbyterian Church polity. The discussion reflected the difficulty that arises when you want to maintain the autonomy of the local church, while at the same time you want to maintain a level of inherent authority for the classis and synod. The overall impression from the discussions on the Constitution was, however, that those present have a real desire to think and act in a Reformed manner. There was a fear of hierarchy. While their present church polity speaks of inherent authority for both classis and synod, it should be realized that this is balanced by the fact that all major decisions must be ratified by the local congregations.

The RCUS maintains fraternal relations with the OPC. It is also seeking membership in NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council). This latter desire was somewhat surprising, considering that some members of NAPARC see the RCUS as being too narrow-minded and too inward looking. At present, the RCUS has a sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). That relationship came especially through their cooperative efforts among the Reformed believers in Zaire.

It was interesting to observe how the members of Synod can initiate actions. For example, study committees were set up to study and defend the RCUS view of the church and its church government, as well as the role of the women in the military upon the request not of particular churches but upon the request of individual members. Such studies, however, are not meant to become extra confessions, but to be of service to the congregations.

During the Synod another worship service was held, on Wednesday evening. Rev. Gross preached a sermon on Psalm 2. There was also opportunity to hear a number of other ministers explain Scripture, as each morning from 9:45 - 10:00 a.m. the Synod held its morning devotions.

As observer from the Canadian Reformed Churches, I was given opportunity to address the Synod. This opportunity was taken advantage of by giving a brief overview of the Canadian Reformed Churches in terms of history, doctrinal standards and life in the churches. Each member of Synod was given a package of information so they could familiarize themselves more with the situation in Canada.

The Synod also gave much attention to the matter of mission. In cooperation with our sister churches in the Netherlands they support work among the Reformed churches in Zaire. Also, a number of mission congregations or chapels are discussed at Synod and financial support is given via Synod. Synod also supervises the publication of the *Reformed Herald* as well as other material for use within the churches.

Another item that received the attention of the Synod was the proposed revision of the liturgical forms used in the RCUS. Some discussion took place as to what translation to use in this proposed revision. It appears that many are quite attached to the King James Version. The Committee was given the mandate to use the New King James Version in its proposal to the next Synod.

During the visit there was much opportunity to speak with many present. There was a friendliness and openness in all the discussions. There was a willingness to share the struggles and problems that arise from striving to hold to the truth.

Though there are some definite differences, in all the personal discussions as well as listening to the discussions on the floor of Synod one could notice one was present in the company of those who love the Reformed faith, and who strive to do things in the Reformed way. It was very encouraging to notice the strong resistance to Arminianism which glorifies man and the desire to proclaim the message of sovereign grace so that the glory for our whole salvation goes to God and Him alone. Even though the RCUS officially subscribes only to the Heidelberg Catechism, both the Belgic Confession and

Our last General Synod was held in 1992 in Lincoln, Ontario and made some decisions that may also be of interest to you. It instructed the Bible Translation Committee to recommend a new Bible translation to our churches seeing that the translation that we are presently using is no longer being printed. It completed the work on our church book, the *Book of Praise*. It also appointed a new committee called "Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity" which has as its task to further unity between our churches and those believers who have left the Christian Reformed Church.

With respect to inter-church relations, Synod Lincoln decided to maintain our relations with your churches, as well as the sister churches in Australia and South Africa. Our membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches was also continued, which means that our Churches will also be represent at the meeting to be held in Zwolle this summer.

As far as new developments are concerned, Synod decided to accept the offer of the Presbyterian Church in Korea to enter into sister church relations, and it also decided to offer such a relationship to the Free Church of Scotland. It decided to investigate the Reformed Church in the United States with a view to entering into sister church relations. With respect to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Synod decided to continue the contact relationship and gave the Committee dealing with this matter a more specific mandate.

You will be interested to know too that we have received word that the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, which meets next week in Edinburgh, will be dealing with a recommendation from its standing committee to accept our offer for a sister church relationship with the Free Church. Our Churches have been invited to be present at this special occasion and in response our Committee has delegated me to travel next to Scotland to finalise this new relationship.

How has this new development come about? It would appear to be a direct result of the fact that Synod Lincoln decided to make some changes to the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship which addressed the reservations that the Free Church had about our old rules. Perhaps our "breakthrough" in this matter can be of some help to you in your attempts to enter into the same kind of relationship with the Free Church.

Brothers, let me draw my words to a close by saying that as churches of our Lord Jesus Christ we need each other. We live in a world that is more and more in rebellion against God. On every side the Evil One assaults us and seeks to draw us away from the Lord and His service. It is essential, therefore, that as Reformed Churches we remain faithful to the Lord our God, that we heed His Word and defend the faith which He has entrusted to us. May Jesus Christ the King of the Church be with you in your work as General Synod Ommen and cause it to be to the glory of His Name, to the well-being of His church here in the Netherlands and a witness in this world to the coming of His kingdom.

J. Visscher



## APPENDICES:

1. Visit to the 247th Synod of the Reformed Church in the U.S.A. by Rev. E. Kampen  
(*Clarion*, July 16, 1993)
2. Address to the Synod of the RCUS by Rev. E. Kampen
3. Third Meeting of the ICRC. by Rev. Cl. Stam  
(*Clarion*, Oct. 22, 1993)
4. Meeting of the delegates of the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Canadian Reformed Churches by Rev. Cl. Stam  
(*Clarion*, Oct. 22, 1993)
5. A Visit to the Netherlands and Scotland by Rev. J. Visscher  
(*Clarion*, Year End Issue 1993 and March 11, 1994)
6. Address to Synod Ommen of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands by Rev. J. Visscher
7. The New Rules for Sister Church Relations in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands adopted by Synod Ommen 1993.
8. Address to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland by Rev. J. Visscher  
(*Clarion*, March 11, 1994)
9. Responding to a Plea: Report on a visit to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia held in Byford, WA. by Rev. E. Kampen.  
(*Clarion*, Sept. 9 and 23, 1994)
10. Addresses to Synod Byford of the FRCA by Rev. E. Kampen
11. Manitowoc (Wisconsin) and Lubumbashi (Zaire) by Mr. A. Nap  
(*Clarion*, Year End Issue 1994)
12. Visit to the ERQ (Sept. 16, 17, 1994) by Rev. C. Bosch.
13. Letters Regarding ICRC Membership:
  - i. Dec. 3, 1992, from the ICRC Secretary
  - ii. Dec. 14, 1992, from the External Relations Committee of the FRCNA
  - iii. Jan. 26, 1993, to the ICRC Secretary
  - iv. Jan. 26, 1993, to the External Relations Committee of the FRCNA
  - v. March 16, 1992, from the Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCUS
  - vi. Jan. 26, 1993, to the ICRC Secretary
  - vii. Jan. 25, 1993, to the Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCUS

**APPENDIX 8**  
**ADDRESS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE**  
**FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND**  
**HELD FROM MAY 17-21, 1993 IN EDINBURGH**

Esteemed Chairman, Members of the Assembly, Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It gives me great pleasure to speak to you today on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Our churches may not be all that well-known to you so let me begin with some background information.

The first Canadian Reformed church was instituted in the city of Lethbridge, in the province of Alberta, in April of 1950. The members were almost exclusively composed of immigrants who had come from the Netherlands. Since that small beginning more than forty years ago we have grown to a total membership of 13,536 spread mostly throughout Canada, with some members living in the United States. Today we are still experiencing a steady, if unspectacular, growth, mostly from within but also increasingly from without. At present we have 44 churches and are growing at a rate of about one new church a year. We also have 42 active ministers, missionaries and professors, as well as 11 retired ministers and professors.

Our churches have their own institution for the training of the ministry called The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed churches located in Hamilton, Ontario. It is staffed by four full-time professors and has a current enrollment of fifteen students.

Our foreign missionary activity is centered in Indonesia (Irian Jaya) and Brazil. In Canada itself we are involved in missionary work among the native people. This work is presently being done in the northern part of the province of British Columbia. Our home mission work or evangelism work is done by each local congregation, frequently making use of radio broadcasts, literature distribution, summer Bible schools, and other efforts. Although not directly tied to the churches, Christian schooling remains a priority and is available to most of the children in our federation. Locally parents have established primary and secondary schools with the result that today we have more than twenty elementary schools, six regional high schools, staffed by hundreds of teachers and populated with thousands of students. I should also add that most of these schools are not subsidized by the state with the result that parental costs vary from between \$3,000 to \$8,000 a year.

Moving from the internal to the external, our churches have formal relations with different churches in this world. We call that relationship "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" and have established it with Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa. Together with you, we are founding members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

As far as recent developments are concerned, the 1992 General Synod of our churches decided to offer to your churches a relationship called Ecclesiastical Fellowship, the details of which you are no doubt aware. Our Synod also accepted the offer of the Presbyterian Church in Korea to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. It decided to take up contact with the Reformed Church in the United States with a view to establishing it. It also decided to continue the contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the United States.

Having passed along these words of introduction, let me speak more specifically to the occasion. I am here today as a representative of our churches and such a role always must be viewed as an honour. Still, I would go so far as to say that my presence here represents a special honour. Why? In the first place, because never before has a representative from our churches addressed your esteemed assembly. In the second place, if your Assembly decides to accept our offer of Ecclesiastical Fellowship it will mean that our churches will be linked together in a common relationship.

- b. When the RPCGA stated that we recommended the OPC for membership in the ICRC, they were mistaken. We issued qualified recommendations for the Free Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in the United States.
- c. In all honesty the CRCA is a bit taken aback by the membership figures supplied by the RPCGA and wonders how congregations of 8-10, 20, 25, 30 members can be viable and support a pastor. It is also astonished at the extensive ecumenical plans of this small federation.

**3. Recommendation**

Your Committee recommends the CRCA be mandated to continue its investigation and report to the next General Synod on its findings with respect to the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly.

**XIII. FINANCIAL STATEMENT 1993-1994 AND BUDGET 1995-1998**

General Synod 1992 charged the CRCA to present a financial statement and budget to General Synod 1995.

With respect to the Financial Statement, the Church for the General Fund (the Church at Carman) has informed the CRCA that in the period 1993 - 1994 a total of \$14,052.98 was spent. The major expenses related to:

the visit to the FRC of Australia	\$5,048.44
the meeting of the ICRC	\$2,542.00 (approx.)
ICRC membership fee	\$1,896.30
the visits to the RCUS	\$1,600.00 (approx.)
the visit to RCN and FCS	\$1,500.00 (approx.)

With respect to a Budget for 1995-1998

ICRC fees	\$2,500.00
the meeting of the ICRC in Korea	\$4,000.00
meeting with the RCUS	\$1,500.00
misc.	\$4,000.00
	<u>\$12,000.00</u>

**XIV. RE-APPOINTMENT**

The Rev. Cl. Stam has requested the CRCA to inform General Synod 1995 that he not be re-appointed for personal reasons. As Committee we would like to express our thanks to Rev. Cl. Stam for the work that he has done as a member of the Committee and for the Churches.

Respectfully submitted by your Committee,  
January 13, 1995

- Elder H. A. Berends
- Dr. S.H. DeBoer
- Rev. E. Kampen
- Elder A. Nap
- Rev. Cl. Stam
- Dr. J. Vanderstoep
- Rev. C. VanSpronsen
- Dr. J. Visscher (convener)



## APPENDIX 9

### RESPONDING TO A PLEA:

#### Report on a visit to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia held in Byford, WA.

##### Introduction

It is always an honour and privilege when you may represent the federation of churches at the broadest assembly of a federation of sister churches. That honour and privilege fell upon Rev. M. van Beveren and myself when we were appointed to visit the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

A question may arise as to why a delegation was sent to Australia at this time. Further, the makeup of the delegation may be somewhat surprising. It is good therefore to briefly explain.

##### Why these ministers? Why this year?

Our relationship with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia of course goes back many years. We both look back to the same country of origin, the Netherlands. We share the same confessional and church political tradition. As churches we are the fruit of immigration into English speaking lands. A number of congregations in Canada have had to say farewell to their ministers as they departed for Australian churches, and some have managed to obtain a minister from Australia. Further, a number of families have seen sons and daughters find their life partner on the under side of the earth. Also, over the years more and more Australian sons have headed for Hamilton in order to study for the ministry of the gospel. Our church life is thus marked by strong historic, ethnic and family ties. Yet, despite these ties, it had never yet happened that either church federation had sent a delegation to the broadest assembly of its ecclesiastical sister. It seems that the Dutch Synods were more diligently visited. Whether that was because it gave an opportunity to visit the "old country" for some of the delegates, or whether it was because those synods were more interesting, that is hard to say. Maybe there was a little of a "mother/daughter" feeling. Whatever it may have been, the time had arrived for a meeting of English speaking sisters.

Yet, the question may come up: why this year? The reason was that the standard invitation to sister churches this time was not "standard." In the letter of invitation the deputies wrote, ". . . we would plead with you to send a delegation to our next synod." In particular they stated that our input would be appreciated on matters of Bible translation and the ICRC, both of which were issues of great concern and even contention in the churches. The word "plead" gave an urgency to the invitation.

As to the makeup of delegation, it so happened that the familiar travel team for the committee had been on a number of assignments which saw them miss a considerable amount of time from their congregations. Thus, the task fell to another committee member. Since a second committee member was not available, Rev. van Beveren was the natural choice because of his long service on the Committee up till his retirement, along with his extensive experience in the matter of the ICRC. In this way the inexperience of one delegate was nicely balanced by the experience of the other delegate.

##### Travelling far from home but still feeling at home

We departed for Australia on June 8, 1994. The Lord granted us a safe, eventful journey, as we arrived at around midnight, June 10.

Having been given one day to overcome travel fatigue, we both were honoured with an invitation to preach in several churches on Sunday. Here you could see concretely something of the catholicity of the church, for though we are geographically thousands of miles apart, the people assemble to hear the same gospel and sing the same praises to God for His grace as we may do in Canada.

of the Rev. C. Bosch to represent the CRCA and is grateful for his report. Furthermore, it is thankful that Classis Ontario North could come to its above-mentioned statement.

- b. At the same time the CRCA is of the opinion that while it had a right to respond positively to the request of the ERQ to send an observer to its September Synod (cf. Acts 1992, Art. 112), it could not do more than that without receiving instructions from General Synod. As a result, we did not feel free to arrange an official visit to the ERQ and to commence a formal investigation.
- c. The CRCA has been urged to initiate such an investigation also because of the immediate needs of the ERQ; however, we are of the opinion that many of the needs of the ERQ can be responded to positively by the CanRC even if there is as yet no formal relationship between our respective church federations.

### **3. Recommendation**

Your Committee makes no recommendation in this matter but awaits further instruction, if any, from General Synod 1995.

## **XII. OTHER REQUESTS**

### **A. The Reformed Church in Zaire (RCZ)**

#### **1. Correspondence**

- a. On Jan. 15, 1993, the Reformed Church in Zaire wrote to the CRCA requesting close relations with the CanRC and asking us to pay a visit to Zaire. This Church also requested that missionaries from Canada be sent to work in Zaire.
- b. On Jan. 25, 1993, we wrote to the Reformed Church in Zaire as per instruction of General Synod 1992 asking it to supply us with information regarding its confessional position, church government, number of congregations and ministers, ecumenical relations, etc. We also asked in what way it differed from the Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire (ERCZ).
- c. On April 30, 1994, we received another letter from the Moderator of the RCZ, the Rev. P.H. Kazadi Lukonda Ngube-Ngube, in which he stated that the RCZ was different from the ERCZ, although they will probably have fellowship in the future. He said that the ERCZ has the Belgic Confession but not the Canons of Dort, whereas, the RCZ is based on the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity.

Rev. Ngube-Ngube stated that he founded the RCZ four years after his return from Zambia where he received his theological training in the Reformed Church in Zambia. The government of his church, he said, is based on the synodical system of synods, presbyteries and consistories. In addition, there are presently 70 congregations, 17 pastors and candidates who will be ordained at a meeting held from June 22 to July 3, 1994. He again expressed a desire to have a relationship with the CanRC and invited us to visit. He also reiterated an earlier request for missionaries. He would like us to send publications and videos tapes of CanRC life.

- d. On May 23, 1994, Rev. Ngube-Ngube wrote us again informing us that an economic crisis existed in his country and asking us to send money for food.
- e. On Aug. 17, 1994, Rev. Ngube-Ngube sent us another letter asking us to participate in the first General Assembly of the RCZ to be held on June 25, 1995 and to assist in the food costs for the 200 expected participants.

From the discussions both on the floor of Synod and on a personal level, it became clear that it was felt this article was needed if the elders were going to be able to properly do their work and tell the parents to send their children to our own school. The impression was received that without such an article the almost total support for the schools could not be maintained. This reasoning gives some reason for concern, for if the matter of reformed schooling is made a matter of legislation rather education of the membership on this matter you may indeed obtain whole, but not wholehearted support. Further, the communal support is now even encoded in the C.O. A consequence of tying this to the baptism vow would seem to be that church discipline would be used for those who do not send their children to our own school, or for those in the community who do not support it.

It appears as a little too much regulation. Reformed education is definitely important, but this does not seem the best way to ensure it.

The overall impression from listening to these discussions was that in an effort to make a typical Australian C.O., there was some unnecessary duplication of work done abroad, with at times too much regulation.

### **Fraternal address and response**

On Tuesday evening opportunity was given to address the Synod on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Brotherly greetings were passed on, along with an expression of understanding about their situation, since we are both immigrant churches. Special comment was made about the Presbyterian question, since this too is a mutual problem as we have to deal not just with Presbyterians far away, but much closer at home, basically in our backyard. We stated that though we did not have ready answers, and that we were facing the same issues in our own federation, it was our desire to be of service to the Synod wherever possible.

On Friday evening, Br. M. Bruning replied on behalf of the Australian churches, indicating appreciation for the presence of a delegation from Canada.

### **Bible translations**

On Thursday evening, in the presence of a large audience, Synod began to deal with one of the contentious issues: Bible translation. The debate was: which version to endorse for use in the churches, the NKJV or the NIV. The two positions were as follows: endorse the NKJV, while granting (for some time) the use of the NIV, or to allow both versions alongside each other, placing them on par. This is an issue on which feelings ran deep. From personal conversations this was confirmed. It appears that the RSV never really took hold in Australia, only having gained official approval in 1983.

The discussion got quite emotional at times, with both elders and ministers making lengthy addresses. The lengthy discourses were mainly in favour of the NKJV. Some of the information presented on the floor of Synod was very technical, even including references to the Hebrew. It appeared indeed that the matter of Bible translation had become a bit of a shibboleth, with positions quite entrenched.

The chairman, at the start of the discussion, had invited us to participate in the discussion at the end of the round. As it turned out, during the round, some questions arose from the delegates about the situation in Canada. When given the opportunity to speak, the Synod was informed that the issue is not as pressing in Canada, as there are sufficient RSV's available for now. It was pointed out that the Acts of Synod Lincoln mention that Premier could possibly print more, although this certainly was not preferable for we don't want to be an island in terms of the translation we use. Further, it was pointed out that the reason the NKJV is being studied in Canada is especially since the Australian churches requested this. This was important to mention, for the Australian churches sometimes have the impression that in Canada we don't listen to them. Synod was informed that there is not much interest in the NKJV at this time. It was suggested that in the matter of Bible translations it might be better to educate rather than legislate. Especially since the discussion was so intense, it might be good to



- c. From a report of our Sub-committee to study the Constitution of the RCUS we quote:

"Preliminary Remark:

The Committee discussed for some time to what extent we are expected to discuss the basic structures of the Constitution in as far as they resemble those of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and have already been evaluated and not found to be an obstacle to recognition as a true Church. Do we start from the assumption that the Presbyterian church polity as such is not an impediment to establish ecclesiastical fellowship? If so, several points ...ought to be presented to their committee for further discussion and clarification."

General Comments:

1. It appears that this Constitution is a remarkable blend of Reformed and Presbyterian church polity. In its general make-up it does, however, give the impression of being more presbyterian than reformed. Presbyterian concepts are given reformed names: consistory, classis, synod, instead of session, presbytery and general assembly but function in a similar manner as under the presbyterian system....
  6. The place of the Heidelberg Catechism is prominent. The Constitution stresses knowledge of and adherence to this confession for all members.
  7. Their ecclesiology shows in the manner of receiving ministers into their communion from other "Orthodox Protestant Churches" (art. 5, 74) as well as at the table of the Lord. What are "other branches of the Christian Church" (art. 4)? What are other denominations "holding the essential doctrines of the Gospel" whose members should be invited to participate in the Holy Supper (art. 189)? Is the pluriformity one of being more or less pure or a matter of different historical/ethnic origins?"
- d. Br. A. Nap visited the 1994 RCUS Synod (Manitowoc). He reported that the RCUS adopted the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Canons of Dort as additional confessional standards.

The CRCA expresses deep thankfulness for this decision.

- e. The 1994 RCUS Synod appointed a committee "to study and defend the Reformed Church in the United States' view of Church Government and Form of Government." This committee expects to present a final report in May, 1995. Included in this report will be:

- "1. An overview of the Canadian Reformed Churches' Church Order;
2. An exegetical study on women voting in the congregational meeting;
3. An exegetical study of the 'one true church' concept;
4. An exegetical study of the idea that the local congregation is not a judicatory;
5. A search of our denominational Constitution as to the idea of judicatory."

#### 4. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends that General Synod 1995 renew the mandate of the CRCA to continue its investigation of the Reformed Church in the United States with a view to entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship according to the adopted Rules.

- c. *Ethical conflict*: It was considered unethical to tell the PCEA at the ICRC you are true church, when you could not make that statement in your own country.
- d. *Losing our children* (argument of fear): All the things taught to the children over the years would be lost. They would now think they could go to these other churches and join them, as well as intermarry. It could impact on who should be allowed to attend the schools, who could join the FRC political party, etc. The FRC identity would change.
- e. *Unity of faith*: It was felt that you could not speak of the unity of faith as long as you did not officially recognize one another and have a sister church relationship. There would need to be greater *uniformity* before one can truly speak of *unity*.

In support of the ICRC one member of Synod noted that the issue had been blown out of proportion. A minor issue had been made a major one. He felt that those opposed handled the matter in a far too technical manner, and that they should show more respect for the work of Jesus Christ. He felt the problem arose from a misunderstanding of what is a true church. He sensed that in the line of argumentation favouring withdrawing one takes the norm of art. 29, applies it to oneself, and then makes oneself the norm.

As advisors, we were allowed to participate in the discussion. Some of the points made were:

- a. In the attacks on the ICRC, it seems that the history of the Liberation had become the norm in the sense of: this is how it was done then, so now we should still do it the same. It was stressed that even though we may be thankful for the lessons learned from history, history is not the norm but Scripture. The norms are the same but each generation must apply them anew for each generation faces new situations.
- b. In some cases very openly, in other cases implicitly, there was the assumption that Presbyterianism is not reformed. Even those who denied that they were anti-Presbyterian time and again buttressed their arguments by attacking the reformed character of the Westminster Standards, often doing so by making caricatures of such things as their ecclesiology or speaking about the place of children in the covenant. This is not the position of the Canadian, or Australian churches for that matter.
- c. There seemed to be an attempt to schematize too much, making everything fit into a logical system. It was almost like the Dutch situation was applied to the immigrant situation. There is need to see the dynamic work of Jesus Christ, and how we have to adjust to it. In connection with this, already in the fraternal address it had been stressed that we are not in the Netherlands anymore, and the neat and understandable categories that fit there, do not fit once we come into a different country. In the fraternal address reference had been made to the fact that in the previous century, the Reformed churches had no difficulty with the Scottish Presbyterians, recognizing it as the work of the Lord. If the water of the North Sea was not too deep to lead to this mutual recognition, to see each other as children of the same King, it would be a shame if we could now not find one another, when as children of those very same churches, we found each other in the same country.

At the end of the second round, again opportunity was given to address the issue. The following is a summary of what was said:

- 1. It was noted that the brothers tried to take the whole matter seriously, yet it was questionable whether they had the right approach. The matter of fear about the consequences of belonging to the ICRC was taken up. The consequences indeed were being felt in the FRC as they were now forced to think about the doctrine of the church, namely, about the catholicity of the church and how to bring it into word and practice. This was beneficial.
- 2. There seemed to be an underlying assumption that the ICRC was not acceptable, so the brothers opposed would bring in all sorts of arguments to support their view,

br. H.A. Berends also attended as Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.

Prof. Gootjes contributed a paper on the subject of "Catechism Preaching."

In view of some editorial comments made in the *1994 Yearbook* of the CanRC, it should be noted that the Canadian Reformed Churches paid directly for the travelling expenses of their two delegates and their one advisor. The other three participants either paid their own way or had their way paid for by the Conference.

- c. The following churches were received as new members:
  - the Free Church of Central India;
  - the Free Reformed Church of North America;
  - the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (USA);
  - the Reformed Church in the United States.

This brings the membership in the ICRC to 15.

- d. The Conference accepted a proposal from the Finance Committee "to assess each member Church, with the understanding that no member Church would bear more than 49% of the assessment." (*Proceedings*, 28:1)
- e. The next meeting of the Conference has been scheduled for Seoul, Korea. The commencement date will be D.V. August 20, 1997.

#### 4. Considerations

Generally speaking, CanRC participation benefited our delegates, advisor, and members and was well received by the other participants. The papers delivered stimulated much constructive discussion. During the plenary sessions and especially during the intermissions, there were many opportunities to learn more about the struggles and difficulties that exist in the member Churches. It was good to hear not only about hardships, but also to hear and observe that the Lord in His grace gathers His Church in many different places in the world. The ICRC provides an excellent forum for sharing experiences and knowledge, and so acts as another means to promote the Church gathering work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

#### 5. Recommendations

- a. Your Committee recommends that the Canadian Reformed Churches continue to participate in the ICRC and that the CRCA submit a report to General Synod 1998 containing its findings and evaluation.
- b. Your Committee recommends that the Canadian Reformed Churches be represented at the next meeting of the Conference scheduled to take place in Korea during the month of August in the year of our Lord 1997.
- c. Your Committee also recommends that Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. C. VanSpronsen be sent as voting delegates and that in view of his familiarity with the language and customs of Korea, Dr. N.H. Gootjes be appointed as advisor.

### X. THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES (RCUS)

#### 1. Correspondence

- a. On Jan. 25, 1993, the CRCA informed the RCUS that Synod 1992 had charged us to investigate the RCUS with a view to entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. We requested that appropriate documents be sent in order that we might be able to commence work on this mandate. Some weeks later the RCUS sent us a large box filled with the material requested.
- b. On Jan. 25, 1993, we also supplied the RCUS with a letter of qualified recommendation to accompany their application for membership in the ICRC.



### **Wednesday, June 22: ICRC & PCEA**

The time had finally come for a decision on the ICRC. The decision in the end was to continue membership in the ICRC, although the next Conference would be made aware of some of the concerns of the Australian churches.

After a coffee break, the Synod began to deal with the PCEA. The ICRC discussion had set the pace for this. A proposal was on the table from the church at Legana to recognize the PCEA as a true church and in that framework continue the discussions. During this discussion it was pointed out by your delegation that the Canadian Reformed churches have worked with the OPC in this framework of mutual recognition. The question is not true or false but how we can live together ecclesiastically. Our problem is somewhat different in that we are in different countries.

### **Farewell and journey home**

Before a decision on the PCEA was reached, the time arrived for your delegates to say farewell, as our plane would be leaving that evening. In the farewell address the synod was pointed to Phil. 4:2,3, where we read about Euodia and Syntyche, two women who loved the Lord but who were in some sort of conflict. Based on Paul's advice in that passage, the brothers were urged to deal with matters as brothers in equal standing before the Lord, for good discussion cannot take place in such a climate of polarization. We sang Hymn 40:1,2 together, and prayer was offered up both for the Synod as it had to continue its work, and for the churches in Australia.

The Lord granted safety in our journey, and we were both able to return to the presence of our loved ones.

### **Conclusion**

In light of the common ground we have with each other as English speaking sisters churches, and the common problems we face, it appears perhaps that it would have been more fruitful for both federations in years gone by to have concentrated their energies on these type of visits, rather than visiting the "mother" country. Perhaps then we might have helped the brotherhood in Australia prevent the polarization they faced on certain issues. We are not a large federation, but the federation in Australia is far smaller yet! The smaller the circle, the more quickly issues get bogged down. Further, being so small, manpower is so limited! Especially in the Australian situation the load falls on such a small number of ministers who become overloaded with monumental assignments. It makes one wonder if in the age of the electronic information highway, we could possibly do more together, rather than trying to do everything in our own federation? I think here especially of the matters as Bible translations and Church Order. After all, we are only finite and we should realize our limitations.

As this report draws to a close, there is one aspect I as yet wish to raise. The impression might have arisen that we sat in judgment over the Australian churches, as if we ourselves are far better, and we have all the answers. It was made clear already to the Synod that we did not come with all the answers. Rather, we had come to show sympathy, support, and to help in whichever way we could, even though the very same issues also were present in our own country. Our presence was an expression of the catholicity of the church and the communion of saints. We could only serve them with the wisdom given to us.

It is our hope that our presence indicated to the brotherhood in Australia that we are certainly concerned about their well-being. Most of all, though, it is our hope that our presence on behalf of the Canadian churches will have been to their edification and to God's glory.

May the Lord bless our humble efforts, and may He bless His churches in Australia.

Rev. E. Kampen

- d. On May 11, 1994, we received two copies of the report of the South African deputies to the Synod Johannesburg 1994. In this report the Deputies ask Synod for a mandate to study and recommend the new Rules adopted by the Canadian and Dutch churches.

## **2. Acts of Synod Pretoria 1992**

From the "Handelinge" we pass on:

- a. A sister church relationship will be continued with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.
- b. Synod decided to continue Ecclesiastical Contact with the Reformed Churches in Sumba/Savu, the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and the Free Church of Southern Africa.
- c. Synod appointed delegates to examine the possibilities of a theological training for members of the FRCSA at Potchefstroom University.
- d. Synod appointed deputies to select 50 hymns from the "Afrikaanse Koraalboek" to serve as an addition to the Psalms sung in the worship services.
- e. Synod expressed a preference for the 1933/53 Bible translation, but also allowed the usage of the New African Bible for study purposes.
- f. Synod re-evaluated the contacts with the Reformed Churches in South Africa. After concluding that the FRCSA and the Reformed Churches in South Africa recognize Scripture as the infallible Word of God, accept the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed and the Three Forms of Unity, have a similar Church Order and Subscription Form, Synod decided that it was time for new initiatives, possibly leading to recognition.

## **3. Consideration**

On the basis of the above, we may conclude that the FRCSA continues to be faithful to God's Word, to the confessions and to the adopted Church Order.

## **4. Recommendation**

Your Committee recommends to General Synod 1995 that Ecclesiastical Fellowship be continued with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa in accordance with the adopted Rules.

# **IX. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (ICRC)**

## **1. Context**

The Canadian Reformed Churches are one of the founding members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). Delegates were sent to the 1982 Constituent Assembly which met in Groningen, the Netherlands, to the first official meeting which was held in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1985, to the second meeting which was held in Langley, B.C., in 1989, and to the third meeting which was held in Zwolle, the Netherlands, in 1993. This third meeting was to have taken place in Seoul, Korea, however, since their facilities were not ready, it was shifted to Zwolle, and held there from Sept. 1 - 9, 1993.

## **2. Correspondence**

- a. On Dec. 14, 1992, a letter was sent to us by the ICRC Secretary, the Rev. M. van Beveren, stating that churches applying for admission needed to have two sponsors and that due to their limited contacts, the Free Reformed Church of North America (FRCNA) and the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) had difficulty obtaining two sponsors. He asked whether the CRCA was prepared to sponsor these two churches.

In humble obedience our forefathers had to make a new start in their new land. For a variety of reasons they could not in good conscience join the churches called "reformed." The establishing of new congregations was done in simple obedience to the Lord.

But, that was not the end of the matter. For, being immigrants it was soon found out that the neat compartments of the home country did not always fit. In our new lands and continents we met Presbyterians. Now Presbyterians did not present so much of a problem when our forefathers lived in the Netherlands and the Presbyterians lived in Scotland. It is well known how the Secession churches had good relations with the Presbyterians. It is one thing when you are separated by a large body of water. What do you do, however, when you nearly live in each other's backyard?

We hope that you will not take it ill of us that we touch this point. We have read the material for your Synod, and we know you struggle with this. Brothers, we struggle with this too. And sad to say, we don't have an answer for you on how to solve this, for we haven't figured it out for ourselves. This does not mean our presence is useless. Rather, may it serve as an encouragement. The apostle Paul says that "no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10:13) Those words put our struggle in perspective, namely, our struggle is not the worst in the world. Others face those struggles too. But even more, it gives us hope, for the Lord will give the way out. Notice, the Lord will provide the way of escape.

If I may add a personal note: Many years ago I came across a little poem. The details, and the author's name, are lost in my memory, but the message lingers, "There were two children of the king, but they couldn't find each other, for the water was way too deep." In our effort to find out how we as the King's children from Dutch descent, and as the King's children from Scottish/British descent should live together in, for both of us, a new land, let us remember: we are the King's children. If the water of the North Sea was not too deep to recognize each other as the work of Jesus Christ, we must take care not to turn the sand between our homes into quicksand. It may be good to remind ourselves sometimes that our primary struggle is not with the faithful Presbyterians, but that with the faithful Presbyterians we strive to walk in the way of the Lord, yes, together we fight against the spiritual host of wickedness. That is not to minimize the problems, but it is to keep it in perspective. Again, as a personal comment, is there not a danger that we are so busy striving for the purity of the doctrine of the church that we fall behind in our struggle for the purity of the life of the church? Perhaps our inter-church relationships would make more positive progress if we did not ask first of all: "what do you think of the church," but, "what do you think about the Christ"? I say this as one who may at times himself have been guilty of asking the wrong question.

This of course brings to mind the matter of the ICRC. Again, we can sympathize with many of your concerns. We can see how they are tied to the "Presbyterian" problem. Again, we share that difficulty of churches in our own country being recognized as true while yet there is not the unity as a federation of churches. (eg. FRC, RCUS, OPC). That only drives home the fact that the scheme of things in the Netherlands doesn't fit so neatly here in the countries where God in His providence has led us. The course chosen, however, by our Synods, is the continued involvement in the ICRC. Should you withdraw, your presence and good contributions to the ICRC would be missed. Consider the obligation put upon us by the confession of the communion of saints, namely, that we should readily and cheerfully use our talents and gifts for the well-being of our brothers and sisters. Suppose there would be no personal gain for you in participating in this conference, there is always the aspect of striving to be a blessing to others. We think especially of the churches in the third world countries.

We realize that many other matters will have your attention too, among them the matter of Bible translations. Again, we struggle with the same issue. No doubt our committees on Bible translation can complement each other, to avoid unnecessary duplication. We also notice your work on the Church Order, the close similarities to the



- e. The Assembly decided to exhort Her Majesty's Government to have regard for the sanctity of the Lord's Day, as well as other moral issues.
- f. A considerable amount of time was also spent on the matter of Church Extension work.
- g. Since the closure, amalgamation and start-up of new churches falls under the work of the Assembly, several matters had to be dealt with. In addition, the sale and purchase of church property and manses also involves the Assembly, along with the local congregations affected.
- h. The Thursday evening of the week that the Assembly meets is customarily devoted to matters of foreign mission. The report of the Board was received and representatives from the mission fields in India, Peru and South Africa spoke.

### 3. Acts of the General Assembly 1994

The General Assembly met from May 23 - 27, 1994, in Edinburgh. Some of the highlights were:

- a. The Assembly entered into a sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands in accordance with the agreed Rules.
- b. The Assembly accepted a report from the Finance, Law and Advisory Committee which contained new regulations for sick leave and leaves of absences by ministers, missionaries and professors. It also passed a supplement as to how disciplinary matters should be handled before the courts of the Church.
- c. A report was received from the Committee on Public Questions, Religion and Morals. This Committee makes representation to the government in moral matters. A report was also received from the Committee on Church Extension. It drew the attention of the Assembly to places where there are encouraging signs of church growth, to home missionaries, and to efforts that needed assistance.
- d. A special committee appointed to visit and examine the workings of the Free Church College in Edinburgh tendered a report that included a number of proposals for change in the exams, semesters, and placement of students.

It was decided that students who have completed the first year of the three year course and students who have completed the second year of the four year course, shall be placed with an experienced minister for a period of six weeks. The programme for the student's placement is to be set out by the minister in consultation with the Kirk Session. Both the minister and the Kirk Session will submit reports on the student's ability, attitude, progress, etc. to the Professor of Practical Theology. These reports will become part of a student's overall assessment.

- e. In its report to the Assembly the Committee on Assembly Arrangements and Ecumenical Relations commented on the ICRC meeting in Zwolle as follows: "Probably the most encouraging feature of the whole Conference was the obvious development of respect and trust between the participating Churches. There was a total lack of the confrontation which had featured occasionally in previous Conferences. Differences of viewpoint emerged from time to time but were always expressed in a pacific manner appreciative of the position of others. For example, though the Free Church representatives were not won over to the idea of replacing preaching from the Scriptures with preaching from the Catechism, we were persuaded that our Church should make much more use of the Westminster Catechism as a teaching tool."
- f. In its report the Visitation Committee to the Free Church College stated, "It is our conviction that we should as a Church be profoundly thankful for the

kingdom. Stop trying to score in your own goal. If you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another.

Going back to Paul's letter to the Philippians, it should not escape our notice how this exhortation to the two sisters is followed by the command to rejoice in the Lord always, to pray, and the "peace of God which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Stick indeed to the apostolic teaching, "and the God of peace will be with you" (vs. 9).

Brothers, it is time to come the end now. We wish to thank you for your excellent hospitality and the Christian fellowship we could enjoy. Though far from home we could feel at home for when we are with God's people we are always at home. We thank you for the opportunity to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments in your midst. If we have caused you offense because of weakness, please forgive us. If we have caused offense because we spoke the truth, please heed us. As we take our leave it is our prayer that God may bless you and keep you, make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

I would ask that we sing together Hy. 40:1,2.

Thank You.  
Rev. E. Kampen

the Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke of South Africa, the Gereja-gereja Reformasi de Indonesia, La Iglesia Cristiana Fe Reformada in Venezuela, Igreja Reformada Colonia Brasolandia (Unai), the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines, and the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin).

- l. The offer of sister church relations to the Free Church of Scotland was again extended under the new Rules.
- m. It was decided to strive towards a sister church relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Eastern Australia, because this is to be recognized as a true church of the Lord.
- n. Contacts will be initiated/continued and intensified with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Presbyterian Association in England, the Ely Reformed Church in Cardiff, the Union des Eglises Reformees Evangeliques Independantes de France, the Greek Evangelical Church, the Iglesias Reformadas de Espana, the Iglesia Christiani Reformada in Madrid and Portugal, the Gereformeerde Kerke in South Africa, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in South Africa, the African Evangelical Presbyterian Church of East Africa, the Reformed Church of East Africa, the Nongo u Kristu u Ken Sudannen Tiv (Nigeria), the Gereja-gereja Masehi Musyafir, Igreja Presbyteriana do Brasil, Igreja Evangelica Reformada do Brasil, the Reformed Church in Japan, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapdong), the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore, the Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India.
- o. The membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) was continued.

### 3. Considerations

- a. From the correspondence and the Acts of General Synod Ommen, the Committee may gratefully conclude that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have shown themselves to be faithful to God's Word and have abided by the Reformed Creeds and Church Order.
- b. The new Rules for sister church relationships adopted by Synod Ommen are almost literally a translation of the Rules adopted by the Canadian Reformed Churches. These Rules therefore pose no problems for the Canadian Reformed Churches, but instead show a remarkable and desired harmony for which we have pleaded in the past.
- c. The decision to grant women in the churches the right to vote does not affect the relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, who have in the past also struggled with this matter and have not made any definite pronouncements on it, except to say that "there is an obvious lack of consensus on this matter" (Acts 1983, Art. 160, C. 1).
- d. With respect to granting elders the right to extend the benediction, the question should be asked how this decision impacts on the relation between the offices, as confessed in Article 30 of the Belgic Confession, and explained in the Form for Ordination of Office Bearers. Do the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands still hold to a three-office view, and if so, what is the relation and distinction between the office of minister and the office of elder?
- e. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands show increased activity with respect to relations with churches abroad. While this is in itself quite laudable, care must be taken to consult with sister churches, especially in areas where the sister churches are actively involved (e.g. in the case of Brazil, the Igreja Presbyteriana do Brasil and Igreja Evangelica Reformada do Brasil, where also the Canadian Reformed Churches conduct mission work).



only true church?" After this begins the tiring task of explaining away these self-inflicted misunderstandings. The Canadian Reformed churches are accountable to the complete contents of those articles, to nothing more, to nothing less."

On the last day of synod the discussion about the proposal to adopt the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort began. Interesting questions were asked: Does having the Three Forms of Unity protect the R.C.U.S. better? Some churches with those confessions are not better protected against liberalism. Does acceptance of additional confessions reduce the importance of the Heidelberg Catechism? Is the H. C. first in order of importance? Do we swear an oath of allegiance to every word of those new confessions? Did Paul indeed write Hebrews? The answers given to those questions were very stimulating. When the question was asked why these changes were necessary, several answers were given. "We use them in our mission work." "This is a return to what we adopted at our first synod in 1746."

Before I report further on those discussions I have to pause for a moment.

### **Lubumbashi**

The R.C.U.S. supports Reformed mission work in Zaire. On Monday, May 19, it was announced the Rev. Kishimba from Lubumbashi, Zaire, would visit the synod. Rev. Kishimba speaks French, the official language of Zaire. However, the translator whose services the synod was going to use, could not come. I hesitated to offer my services since my French is covered under layers of Portuguese. It became a wonderful experience. Through God's providence, I was allowed to translate an amazing story about the wondrous works of the Lord.

When he was young, Rev. Kishimba listened to the Reformed mission programs from the "Back to God Hour." That same organization made it possible for him to study theology for 4 years in Aix-en-Provence, France. Student Kishimba's wife and two children stayed behind in Zaire.

About 10 years ago Rev. Kishimba started his work as a minister in Zaire. Now there are 250 congregations (100,000 [?] members). Those 250 congregations have only two ministers. So the training of ministers is of utmost importance. The G.K.N. (Spakenburg) have already sent two missionaries for the training of ministers. Soon a third and a possible fourth will follow. The Dutch Mission Aid organization also has a worker in Zaire.

At this moment Zaire experiences a famine. Rev. Kishimba spoke about suffering congregation members as well as about another threat the famine poses to the young churches in Zaire. It is the question: How can a sovereign God allow this to happen? Is He really sovereign?

Since many people in Zaire do not speak French, the Heidelberg Catechism has been translated into three different languages.

### **Adopted**

We have to go back to the synodical discussions about the confessions for a moment. You should have seen how the eyes of Rev. Kishimba lit up when I translated the results of the final vote: 39 yeas, 13 nays.

He told me:

"In Zaire, many years ago, before the help from the U.S.A. and Holland, someone said: 'Not every church that calls itself Reformed is really Reformed. But I can recommend the R.C.U.S. They have the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession.'"

After telling me this we agreed that the R.C.U.S. followed the good example of the Zairian churches.

On May 20 I flew home. After all it was a nice break indeed. A break in which I learned a lot about the providence of God.

Let us praise His name for all His wondrous works.

A. Nap

- b. On March 29, 1993, we notified the Dutch deputies that although we had taken a decision not to send a delegate to Synod Ommen 1993, that decision had since been reviewed and altered due to the urging of the Free Church of Scotland. The Committee on Ecumenical Relations of the FCS had unanimously decided to recommend to the Assembly to accept the offer of Ecclesiastical Fellowship from the CanRC and asked if a member of the CRCA could be in attendance. As a result, the CRCA delegated Dr. J. Visscher to attend and seeing that he could travel just as economically via Amsterdam as London decided also to delegate him to attend Synod Ommen.
- c. The CRCA received a letter from the Dutch deputies, dated Nov. 25, 1993, in which they informed us of pertinent decisions taken by Synod Ommen. They relayed that Synod Ommen had decided to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC. They also notified us that this Synod had adopted new Rules for this relationship and that those Rules were very similar to the Rules adopted by Synod Lincoln 1992. (A comparison reveals that Synod Ommen adopted verbatim the Rules that the CRCA had proposed to Synod Lincoln. Synod Lincoln decided to make some alterations in the CRCA's proposal, Synod Ommen did not.)
- d. On Jan. 17, 1994, we received another letter from the CRCA of the RCN telling us that they had been instructed by Synod Ommen to send a delegation to Brazil to take up contact with the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB) and the Igreja Evangelica Reformada do Brasil (IERB). They asked if the CanRC had made any decisions with respect to these two churches. In addition, they promised to send a copy of the report of this visit. On March 28, 1994, we informed them that no decisions had been made by the CanRC with regard to these two Brazilian churches.
- e. On March 25, 1994, the Dutch deputies wrote us again and told us once more about their new Rules. They stated that the Rules adopted by the Free Church of Scotland correspond to the new Dutch Rules. They also expressed happiness that a sister church relationship had been established between the CanRC and the FCS. Appreciation was conveyed over the fact that Dr. J. Visscher had been delegated to attend Synod Ommen.  
 On a different note, the Dutch deputies also asked us for information on the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church – General Assembly (RPCGA). They asked as well whether we could keep them up to date on developments in the Christian Reformed Church. On Oct. 24, 1994, we responded in detail to their request regarding the CRC, but were not able to share with them much knowledge about ARPC. As for the RPCGA, a packet of information had been received by the CRCA and was under study.
- f. On Dec. 9, 1994, the RCN Deputies sent us a copy of a report made by Mr. J. van Dijk and Rev. J. T. Oldenhuis regarding the IPB and IER of Brazil. It is currently being studied by the CRCA.

## 2. Acts of Synod Ommen 1993

From the Acts we pass on the following highlights:

- a. Synod Ommen granted retirement to Prof. Drs. H.M. Ohmann and appointed as his successor, Drs. G. Kwakkel.
- b. Dr. J. Visscher visited this Synod on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Other fraternal delegates were: Rev. N. Hoeflinger (Reformed Church in the US), Rev. G. Ball (Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland), Rev. I.N. a Kuibondo and Rev. N.K. Kasastika (Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire), and Rev. C. Bouwman (Free Reformed Churches of Australia).

- There is a document concerning the ERQ. Do we not need one concerning the Canadian Reformed churches?

**Observations:**

We were able to answer a number of questions concerning our churches. One or two of the delegates were concerned with a feared loss of identity resulting from ecclesiastical fellowship. Others spoke very positively of the prospect of joining in close fellowship with us. A brother made this telling comment. "I hear you saying that you do not desire an ecumenicity based on feelings but one which is based on the Word of God. This is the ecumenicity we desire."

From the documentation as well as the information provided at this 'synod' it is evident that the ERQ is in the process of formation. Although the ERQ is united in its commitment to the reformed faith many practices which have a long and well-established history in our churches are new or as yet unknown in the ERQ. There is no regular catechetical instruction of the youth of the church, though Bible Study groups exist in all of the churches. Before anyone is joined to the church there is a period of thorough instruction. In the case of some this may be only of a few weeks duration while others are instructed for a year or more before making profession of faith. Regular church attendance is considered a measure of faithfulness and there is no haste involved in the process of coming to church membership. The ERQ requires a credible profession of faith of its members, while its office bearers must knowledgeably subscribe to the confessions. Delegates expressed the concern that the members come to a better understanding of the Word of God and the confessions. They see linking with ourselves as a means to this end.

Ottawa's "Overture to Classis. . . ." spells out in detail the policies and practices of the ERQ and I will not repeat what is written in this document. Suffice it to say that there are as yet no uniform standards in the ERQ regarding various matters such as the supervision of the Lord's Supper table, the issuing of attestations to departing members etc. At least one of their churches has recently adopted a practice which allows only communicant members of the ERQ to partake of the Lord's Supper.

It was evident from this meeting as well as from private discussions with some of the delegates that here is a small group of Reformed churches which want to be faithful to the Lord. They have taken pains to adopt a Church Order which does justice to the Word of God. (see enclosed) They are determined, D.V., to be a light in the midst of a secularized, French-speaking society.

Their background is different from that of our own. In some of their documents you 'hear' the Heidelberg Catechism and in their practices, elements of presbyterianism are noticeable. They owe a debt to the PCA who have lent them missionaries and to the Chr. Ref. Church which has given them financial support.

It is crystal clear that they value their independence as French-speaking churches. In this regard, (though our borders are still open) they might well be regarded as, "churches abroad." They have adopted a unique church order which, though reformed is not a copy of the church order of Dort.

We did not have time to discuss at length issues such as the fencing of the Lord's Supper and women in the office of deacon. This particular meeting had to decide whether or not it wanted to enter into close affiliation with ourselves or not and it spent much time discussing this issue. The thought was expressed that more in depth discussion regarding matters of doctrine and church order would be desirable.

I was asked whether I would recommend that the ERQ pursue ecclesiastical fellowship with us rather than a less formal, freer association. On the basis of Christ's prayerful demand for the unity of all true believers I could only answer in the affirmative.

**Recommendations:**

1. That the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad approach the ERQ with a request to visit their churches as soon as possible. I think this is essential if our



## V. THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA (PCK)

### 1. Correspondence

- a. In December of 1992 a card, with an enclosed letter, was received from the Korea Theological Seminary, wishing our churches the blessings of the Lord for 1993 and informing us of changes in the Seminary faculty as well as the fact that 436 students were enrolled at the Seminary. Among these students there exists considerable financial need.
- b. On January 25, 1993, the PCK was informed that Synod 1992 of the CanRC had accepted the invitation of the PCK to enter into a sister church relationship. We informed them of our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, as revised by Synod 1992, and of our desire to maintain our relationship on the basis of these Rules. Due to the costs involved, Synod did not deem it appropriate for a delegation to travel to Korea, but it was suggested that perhaps this relationship could be formalized at the upcoming meeting of the ICRC in Zwolle, the Netherlands. This suggestion was later agreed to by the PCK.
- c. In a letter dated Feb. 22, 1993, the PCK informed us about the highlights of the 42nd General Assembly which met on Sept. 21-25, 1992. Some of the highlights include:
  - the addition of three new presbyteries;
  - that divorce be permitted “when other party who is unbeliever makes his (or her) christian life impossible and forces him (or her) to divorce .... when other party who is fallen in sectarian belief hinders proper christian family life and requests divorce;”
  - the immediate past chairman is ineligible for re-election to the chair;
  - to attend the third meeting of the ICRC (Sept., 1993) and to send two delegates;
  - the Assembly set aside 1992-3 as the year for the study of Reformed evangelism; 1993-4 as the year for the study of mission; 1994-5 as the year for the study of deaconal works;
  - every congregation was urged to choose at least one region in North Korea and pray for evangelization, while looking forward to the day of liberation and union;
  - to appoint one person to study and gather information on mission work in communist China;
  - the wording of the Constitution of the PCK was modernized;
  - it was reported to the Assembly that the General Assembly building (to be called the Rev. Bruce Hunt Memorial building in honour of this OPC missionary) was progressing and would be completed in August of 1993;
  - 41 ministers of the PCK are serving as army chaplains;
  - 19 new churches were instituted in 1992 and 6 joined the PCK; 1 church was closed;
  - \$5,000.00 US was donated to Christians who had suffered from the riots in Los Angeles and Atlanta, USA.
- d. On September 2, 1993, a joint meeting was held in Zwolle, the Netherlands to formalize the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Presbyterian Church in Korea. (For particulars on this meeting see the Appendices);

**APPENDIX 13**  
**LETTERS REGARDING ICRC MEMBERSHIP:**  
**DECEMBER 3, 1992, FROM THE ICRC SECRETARY**

*The International Conference  
of Reformed Churches*

Secretary:

Rev. M. van Beveren  
13904 - 86 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Canada T5E 3C1  
Tel. (403) 478-5852

December 3, 1992

The Committee on Relations with  
Churches Abroad,  
c/o Dr. J. Visscher,  
5734 - 191A Street,  
Surrey, B.C. V3S 4N9

Esteemed Brethren,

While you are aware of the fact that the *Free Reformed Church of North America* and the *Reformed Church in the United States* are applying for membership in the I.C.R.C., I would like to draw your attention to the fact that due to their limited contact with other churches, those applying churches have difficulty to be sponsored by two I.C.R.C. member churches.

At this moment the RCUS is recommended by the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands only, whereas the Free Reformed Church of North America has not yet any sponsor.

That is why I kindly ask you whether your Committee would be willing to consider to recommend those two churches for membership in the I.C.R.C. in accordance with Art.VII,e and Art.V,3 of the *Regulations of the I.C.R.C.*

I wish you the Lord's blessings in all your endeavours.

With brotherly greetings,

  
(M. van Beveren)

5. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations.
6. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits to each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted by the respective church federations. Also the churches agree in principle to the possibility of calling each other's ministers, while the churches reserve for themselves the right to maintain their own rules in connection with the extension and approval of calls.
7. In cases of substantial changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms this intention shall be brought to the special attention of the sister churches, so that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.
8. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers, as much as possible.

The Dutch churches specifically, as well as the other sister churches, were to be asked to adopt these rules. It was also decided to discontinue offering "temporary ecclesiastical contact" and to work toward sister relations with those churches with whom the FRCA has this relationship.

- f. Much time was spent on the issue of the ICRC. Synod had to deal with a great number of submissions by church members. A key concern was the issue of "unity of faith." Synod decided to continue membership in the ICRC. Due to the concerns signaled, a meeting of sister churches was to be convened prior to or coinciding with the next ICRC.
- g. The matter of Bible translation continued to be of concern. It appears that the RSV has never gained much acceptance. It was decided to "recommend to the churches that the NKJV be used for study, instruction and family purposes," and to appoint new deputies who are "to continue the study of the NKJV, in comparison with the NIV, to determine whether the NKJV can be endorsed as a final recommendation to the churches." This decision was to be communicated to Synod Lincoln 1992, in order that our churches might reach a similar decision.

### 3. Acts of Synod Byford, June 14-27, 1994

From the Acts we note the following details:

- a. The following officers were elected: Chairman – Rev. W. Huizinga; Vice chairman – Rev. C. Bouwman; Clerk-Elder A. Slobe; Second Clerk – Rev. C. Kleyn.
- b. Upon a proposal from the Church at Kelmscott, it was agreed to use advisory committees only for those items that synod as a whole decides would benefit from such referral and revert to the 1985 decision to use the headings MATERIAL, DECISION, and GROUNDS.
- c. Synod adopted a final version of the Church Order in the tradition of Dort adapted to the Australian situation.
- d. With respect to Bible translation, it was decided: "To endorse the NKJV as a faithful and reliable translation for use in the churches, as well as for study, instruction and family purposes."  
 "To allow the NIV to be used in the church service, and for study, instruction and family purposes."  
 "To allow a period of transition for the churches to move away from the RSV in two years." (Art. 55)



JANUARY 26, 1993,  
TO THE ICRC SECRETARY

THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD  
OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

Secretary:  
Dr. J. Visscher  
5734-191A St.  
Surrey, B.C. V3S 4N9  
Canada

January 26, 1993

THE FREE REFORMED CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA  
External Relations Committee  
Rev. C. Pronk, Secretary  
163 George St.,  
St. Thomas, Ontario  
N5P 2M3

Dear Brothers,

Greetings! In your letter of December 14, 1992, you inquired about the possibility of the Free Reformed Church of North America receiving a letter of recommendation from the Canadian Reformed Churches with a view to your application to join the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

On the one hand, our Committee is convinced that the Constitution of the ICRC does not require you to submit two letters of recommendation. This matter is mentioned under the Regulations - Article VII 1(e) but there it has to do with sending observers to the Conference.

On the other hand, we recognize that the Secretary of the ICRC has a different interpretation regarding this matter and that you are thus caught in the midst of what may be called a question of constitutional interpretation. Hopefully, the next meeting of the Conference will resolve this matter once and for all.

As for your request to us, we have to admit that it is complicated by the fact that at the moment there is no official relationship between our respective Churches. Notwithstanding that, we have taken note of the fact that, historically speaking, the Canadian Reformed Churches have always regarded the Free Reformed Church of N.A. as a faithful church of our Lord, that students from the Free Reformed Church of N.A. receive their training for the ministry at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario, and that a number of local churches in both federations have had and continue to have discussions to promote greater unity.

In conclusion, our Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches hereby encloses a letter that you can pass on to the International Conference of Reformed Churches recommending that it accept the Free Reformed Church of North America as a member of the ICRC.

May the Lord continue to bless and keep you, as well as promote greater unity between our respective churches.

With brotherly greetings,  
For the Committee,

---

J. Visscher, convener/secretary

## IV. THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA (FRCA)

### 1. Correspondence

- a. After the Synod of 1992 met, the FRCA were informed about the decisions taken that pertained to them. A copy of the new Rules for relations with Sister Churches was sent to them. Copies of the Acts of 1992 were sent as soon as they were received from the printer. Appreciation for their support of the Theological College was expressed.
- b. In a letter from FRCA deputies dated Feb. 15, 1993, it was expressed that the FRCA wish to maintain Hymn 1A unaltered.
- c. Concerning the ICRC, a letter was sent indicating that we were not opposed to an informal meeting with sister churches. The delegates at the ICRC met informally and discussed the difficulty among the Australian churches with the expression "unity of faith" at the ICRC. The Australian opinion that closer unity in credal statements and church polity must be reached before we can speak of such unity was discussed at length. The difficulty of the Australian sister churches was not shared by the others at the meeting.
- d. In a letter dated 31 January 1994, we were informed of the Synod scheduled to be held in Byford, starting June 14, 1994. The letter stated "...we would plead with you to send a delegation to our next synod. "Input was sought especially in two matters on the agenda, namely Bible translation and the ICRC. Rev. C. Stam and Rev. J. Visscher were delegated, with Rev. E. Kampen as alternate. (See Appendices)

### 2. Acts of Synod Bedfordale, 1992

Synod Bedfordale met from May 18-June 8, 1992. Since the Acts were not available in time to report to Synod Lincoln, 1992, we as yet note some items from the Acts that will serve to give a picture of the life of the FRCA.

- a. The following officers were elected: Chairman – Rev. A. Veldman; Vice chairman – Rev. A. van Delden; First clerk – elder J. Eikelboom; Second clerk – Rev. C. Bouwman.
- b. A tremendous amount of time was spent on matters of interchurch relationships, not only on a national level (Australia) but also internationally. The following is gleaned from the Acts:
  - i. Synod decided to continue contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches. In the *considerations* disappointment was expressed that there is not more information about our churches. The specific example mentioned was contact with the OPC. The deputies were urged to give more content to the contact with our churches.
  - ii. Sister church relations were continued with the Presbyterian Church in Korea, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, as well as with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN). Disappointment was expressed that the "RCN in the matter of recognizing sister churches did not honour their commitment under the adopted Rules for relations with churches abroad (Rule e)." This pertains especially to the RCN entering into sister church relations with the RCUS, the Eglise Reformee Confesante au Zaire and the Free Reformed Church of the Philippines without informing or consulting the sister churches in Australia.
  - iii. Sister church relations were continued with the Reformed Churches of Sumba Timor Savu (RCSTS). The Musyafir Churches in Timor were to be further investigated to see if they can be recognized as true and faithful churches. Johnson Dethan from the Musyafir Churches and

**MARCH 16, 1992, FROM THE  
INTERCHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE RCUS**

**REFORMED CHURCH IN THE U. S.  
Interchurch Relations Committee**

**March 16, 1992**

Dr. J. Visscher  
5734-191 A Street  
Surrey, B.C.  
V3S4N9 Canada

Dear Dr. Visscher,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who has shed His grace, mercy and peace upon us.

It is our prayer that our Lord will continue to give us His wisdom, guidance and blessing as we work toward establishing fraternal relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. We are presently seeking membership status in the International Conference of Reformed Churches and are hoping by that to have a closer working relationship with conservative Reformed Churches worldwide.

The purpose of this letter is first to encourage the Canadian Reformed Churches to have an observer present at our 246th Annual Synodical meeting which shall convene on the evening of April 20, 1992 and shall adjourn April 23, 1992.

The other reason for writing this letter is to inquire about the possibilities of the RCUS receiving from the Canadian Reformed Churches a letter of recommendation to join the International Conference of Reformed Churches. We need two recommendations from two member churches. We requested a recommendation from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and, if possible, we would appreciate one from your church as well.

We will be keeping in contact with you regarding the progress of establishing fraternal relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. If there is any further questions or clarifications please call me at (209) 367-0552 or write to 245 E. Vine Street, Lodi, CA 95240.

May God bless our churches.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Rev. Jonathan Merica*

Rev. Jonathan Merica, Chairman  
RCUS Interchurch Relations



1992, and to advise the churches and Synod 1995 of the response of the Free Church of Scotland. (Acts 1992, Art. 128, IV, A, B, C)

#### **E. The Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)**

- 6.1. to thank the church at Carman, MB and the CRCA for their work done with regard to the RCUS and express our appreciation for the desire of the RCUS to establish fraternal relations with our churches.
- 6.2. to mandate the CRCA to investigate the RCUS with a view to entering into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, making use of the findings of the church at Carman, MB. (Acts 1992, Art. 79, IV, A, B)

#### **F. The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)**

- 7.1. that the CanRC continue to participate in the ICRC.
- 7.2. that the CanRC be represented at the next meeting of the ICRC, Zwolle 1993.
- 7.3. that two members of the CRCA be sent to the ICRC, Zwolle 1993, as voting delegates and Dr. N.H. Gootjes as advisor (with Dr. J. Faber as alternate).
- 7.4. that the CRCA report to the next General Synod, as well as to the churches, giving a report and evaluation of the ICRC, Zwolle, the Netherlands, (D.V.) 1993. (Acts 1992, Art. 94, IV, A, B, C, D)

#### **G. Committee Mandate**

- 8.1. to give the CRCA the following mandate:
  1. to investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship;
  2. to respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meeting of other churches;
  3. to report on its findings with suitable recommendations, to the next General Synod.
- 8.2. this mandate allows the CRCA to further investigate the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) and the Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire (ERCZ).
- 8.3. that the CRCA submits to Synod 1995 a financial statement and budget. (Acts 1992, Art. 112, IV, A, 1, 2, 3, B, C)

## **II. RULES FOR ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP**

General Synod 1992 revised the existing Rules of Correspondence and decided to call them officially "Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship." The revised rules read as follows:

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.

**JANUARY 25, 1993, TO THE  
INTERCHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE RCUS  
THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD  
OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

Secretary:  
Dr. J. Visscher  
5734-191A St,  
Surrey, B.C. V3S 4N9  
Canada

January 25, 1993

THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES  
Interchurch Relations Committee  
245 E. Vine Street,  
Lodi, CA 95240  
USA

Dear Brothers,

Greetings! In your letter of March 16, 1992, you inquired about the possibility of the Reformed Church in the U.S. receiving a letter of recommendation from the Canadian Reformed Churches with a view to your application to join the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

On the one hand, our Committee is convinced that the Constitution of the ICRC does not require you to submit two letters of recommendation. This matter is mentioned under the Regulations - Article VII 1(e) but there it has to do with sending observers to the Conference.

On the other hand, we recognize that the Secretary of the ICRC has a different interpretation of this matter and that you are thus caught in the midst of what may be called a question of constitutional interpretation. Hopefully, the next meeting of the Conference will resolve this matter once and for all.

As for your request to us, we have to admit that it is complicated by the fact that at the moment there is no official relationship between our respective Churches. Notwithstanding that we have taken note of the fact that General Synod 1992 of the Canadian Reformed Churches instructed us to investigate your Churches with a view to entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Reformed Church in the U.S. Such a mandate is only given when a General Synod is convinced that there is good reason to believe that we have to do here with a Church that is faithful to the Lord and to the Reformed faith. The fact that there has been in the past between one of our local churches, the Church at Carman, and several churches in the RCUS has served also to promote this conviction at our General Synod 1992.

Furthermore, the fact that the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Church in the U.S. have a common sister church in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, gives us a further degree of certainty that in the RCUS we have to do with a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches hereby encloses a letter that you can pass on to the International Conference of Reformed Churches recommending that it accept the Reformed Church in the U.S. as a member of the ICRC.

May the Lord continue to bless and keep you, as well as promote greater unity between our respective churches.

With brotherly greetings,  
For the Committee,