

APPENDIX I

COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD LINCOLN 1992

Esteemed Brethren,

We hereby submit to you our report on the activities of the Committee on Relations With Churches Abroad (CRCA), appointed by General Synod 1989.

I. MANDATE

General Synod Winnipeg 1989 gave our Committee the following mandate:

A. General

1. To continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, and Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. To charge the committee to send an invitation to sister churches abroad at least one year prior to the date the next general synod is to convene and to have our churches represented by a delegate to general synods of such churches abroad if invited and when feasible.
3. To renew the mandate of the Committee as given by Synod 1986 concerning the following points:
 - a. to request the churches abroad that in the matter of relationship or contact with third parties "there be consultation and coordination between sister churches."
 - b. to request the churches abroad that contacts in countries where sister churches are already established be made not independently but in consultation with these sister churches.
 - c. to continue to address the sister churches on the matter of church relations, setting forth the decisions and concerns of the Canadian Reformed Churches, as outlined by the General Synods of Smithville (Acts, Art. 154, D, 1, 2) and Cloverdale (Acts, Art. 110, D, 1).
 - d. to evaluate the reaction of the sister churches in these matters with respect to a possible common approach.
 - e. to report to the next General Synod with suitable recommendations.
(Acts 1989, Art. 102, E, 2, 3, 4)

D. The Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK)

4. to charge the Committee to continue to be diligent regarding the matter of communication with the PCK, and report to the next General Synod.
(Acts 1989, Art. 103, D, 2)

E. The Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

5. to renew the mandate given to the Committee by Synod 1986 Art. 178, E, Recommendations 2, a,b,
(This mandate reads as follows:
 - a. to charge the Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad to open contacts with the FCS to investigate and evaluate their history, background, doctrinal standards and their maintenance, church govern-

ment, and their practices in order to ascertain whether we should recognize them as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ and should enter into a sister church relation with them;

- b. to instruct the Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad to continue to inform the churches about the history, background, doctrinal standards and their maintenance, church government, and practices of the other churches which participate in the ICRC and with whom we have no sister church relationship.)

and charge the Committee to come to Synod 1992 with a report of its findings and recommendations.

6. to inform the FCS that it is our desire to do full justice to the scriptural call for church unity by putting this unity to practice and be united in the same federation of churches with all the faithful congregations in Canada and the U.S.A.
7. to keep the current sister churches informed of all progress made in this regard, and to work in cooperation with them.
8. to inform the churches concerning the affiliated churches of the FCS in Canada and the U.S.A.
9. to keep the churches informed of progress made.
(Acts 1989, Art.116, D, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)
10. that the Committee for Contact (Relations – correction Committee) with Churches Abroad take into account in its discussions with the FCS the relationship of local Canadian Reformed Churches and local congregations of the FCS in Canada with respect to expressing full unity of the faith.
(Acts 1989, Art. 117, D)

F. The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

11. that the Committee overtures the ICRC to make discussion of the Constitution a matter of priority.
12. that the mandate as expressed by Synod 1986, Art. 175, D, 2, a, b, c be maintained.
(This mandate reads as follows:
To advise the executive of the ICRC that the amendments as proposed by the General Synod of Burlington West 1986 be placed on the agenda instead of those proposed by Synod Cloverdale 1983, to wit:
 - a. that a stipulation be included in the “Basis” of the ICRC that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are a member;
 - b. that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership of the ICRC;
 - c. that “CONSTITUTION Art. V – Authority” be amended to read:
“The conclusions of the conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation.”)
13. that the delegates keep the churches informed regarding the activities of the Conference by means of Press Releases. (Acts 1989, Art. 128, D, 2, 3, 4)

II. RULES FOR ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP

The rules for ecclesiastical fellowship referred to in our mandate are:

- a. “To take mutual heed that the corresponding churches do not deviate from the Reformed Confession in doctrine, liturgy, church government and discipline.
- b. “To forward to each other the agenda and decisions of the broader Assemblies and to admit each other’s delegates to these Assemblies as advisors.

- c. "To inform each other concerning changes of, or additions to, the Confession, Church Order and Liturgical Forms, while the corresponding churches pledge to express themselves on the question whether such changes or additions are considered acceptable. Regarding proposals for changes in the Three Forms of Unity, the sister churches abroad shall receive ample opportunity (at least three years) to forward their judgment before binding decisions will be made.
- d. "To accept each other's attestations and to permit each other's ministers to preach the Word and to administer the sacraments.
- e. "To give account to each other regarding correspondence with third parties."
(Acts 1962, Art.139; Acts 1968, Art.79, 6, b)

III. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

1. Declarations

- a. The following ministers and professors of the Canadian Reformed Churches, planning to travel abroad, requested and received a declaration that they are ministers in good standing in the Churches:
The Revs. B.J. Berends, R.F. Boersema, D. DeJong, K. Deddens, J. Faber, J. Mulder, J. van Rietschoten, G. Wieske.
- b. The following ministers of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands visited Canada:
The Revs. C. Bouwman, K. Jonker, A.J. Pol, L. Moes.

2. Acts

When the Acts of General Synod Winnipeg 1989 were received, a sufficient number of copies was sent to the sister churches, as well as to the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church in Korea.

3. Notifications and Invitations

Letters of notification and invitation were sent to the sister churches regarding the convening of General Synod Lincoln 1992. Copies of the Provisional Agenda were sent.

4. Interim Reports

Two members of the Committee, namely Rev.Cl. Stam and Dr.J. Visscher, travelled to the Netherlands and Scotland from September 11-26, 1990. An extensive report of this visit was published in *Clarion* (Vol.40, No.2, January 18, 1991). This report has been added to the appendices.

IV. THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA (FRCA)

1. Correspondence

- a. After Synod 1989 met, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia were informed about the decisions taken that pertained to them, as well as other matters that had to do with inter-church relations generally. Copies of the Acts 1989 were sent as soon as they were received from the printer.
- b. In a letter dated Oct.30, 1989, the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad informed us that Synod Armadale scheduled to meet on Nov.7, 1989, had to be postponed to May 1, 1990, due to a domestic airline strike.
- c. On April 5, 1990, your Committee sent the best wishes of our churches to the FRCA on the occasion of their General Synod Armadale.
- d. On Dec. 11, 1990 the Australian Deputies informed us about some of the highlights of Synod Armadale and stated that two copies of the Acts were underway.

- e. On Aug. 21, 1991, the same Deputies sent us a letter in which they asked your Committee to react to a number of considerations found in the Acts of Synod Armadale. These considerations have to do with the matter of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). Our Committee studied this request and informed them that as far as we could see these considerations had to do with internal matters in the FRCA and that as such it would be inappropriate for us to comment on them. With respect to the ICRC and our evaluation of it, we referred the Deputies to this Report. The Australian Deputies also wanted to know our reaction to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's (OPC) application for membership in the ICRC. We replied that this application would be a matter on which the ICRC itself will have to come to a judgment. Furthermore, we added that our churches have never taken the position that a church with which we have as yet no permanent relationship should for that reason be denied membership in the ICRC.

2. Acts of Synod Armadale 1990

Synod Armadale 1990 met from May 1 - 21. Some of the following highlights have been gleaned from the Acts of 1990:

- a. The following officers were elected: Chairman - Rev.W. Huizinga, Vice-Chairman - Rev.C. Bouwman, 1st Clerk - Rev.C. Bosch, 2nd Clerk - Elder A. Slobe. Following the Dutch custom the delegates rise to express their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.
- b. A number of decisions were taken with respect to other churches:
 - i. The Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA) sent an observer to Synod. Seeing that the designation and status of an "observer" has never been defined, Synod decided to receive him as a visitor and welcomed him as such. Synod also stated that before real progress can be made with the RCA, attention has to be paid to the issues that divide the respective churches. Deputies for contact were appointed to pursue the matter.
 - ii. The Deputies have had contact with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) and reported on it. It was noted with joy that the RCNZ had withdrawn from the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC, formerly RES). Synod decided to continue the contact, but at the same time expressed the view that the relations which the RCNZ maintained with certain third parties continued to be an impediment. Deputies were given permission to visit the RCNZ in order to deal with outstanding issues.
 - iii. Synod received a request from the Reformed Church of Papua-New Guinea (RCPNG) for a sister church relationship. It decided that such a request was premature and sent a letter of encouragement to these young mission churches, under the care of the church at Albany.
 - iv. Synod instructed its Deputies to continue to investigate the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (ERCS) with a view to establishing sister church relations. In this connection matters relating to covenant and election need to be discussed further. Deputies were also told to visit this church. In its considerations Synod renewed its support for a policy which sees the Australian sister churches concentrating more on churches which are geographically close to them.
 - v. Synod decided to continue its sister church relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK). Synod also stated that recent additions to the Westminster Confession indicated that the PCK was obedient to the Scriptures. Deputies were instructed to improve on the exchange of information between the churches.
Synod also decided to continue the sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN), the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (VGKSA), the Reformed Churches of Sumba-Savu-Timor (RCSST), and the Canadian Reformed Churches (CRC),

- vi. Synod instructed its Deputies to seek contact with the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church (GMMC) on Timor with a view to establishing sister church relations. Deputies were also told to send information to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPCA) and to investigate these churches if they seek membership in the ICRC.
- vii. Synod decided to discontinue attempts to contact the Presbyterian Church of Uganda (PCU), and the Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ).
- viii. Synod decided to keep contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI) "at a low level" relying on the Dutch sister churches for information and perhaps requesting some from the RPCI itself. Much the same appears to be case with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (RPCT).
- ix. Synod decided to continue to move in the direction of a sister church relationship with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS). Deputies were instructed to get clarification on whether or not their offer of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact has been accepted by the FCS.
- x. Synod expressed thankfulness that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland has accepted its offer of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact and will use it to come to a full sister church relationship.
- c. Synod spent a considerable amount of time dealing with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA). It expressed thankfulness for the willingness of the PCEA deputies to discuss matters, requested further discussion on matters relating to supervision of the Lord's table, the practice of pulpit exchange, the position of children in the covenant; and appointed new deputies to work towards mutual recognition.
- d. Synod spent even more time dealing with matters relating to the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). It instructed new deputies to deal with a list of concerns with respect to the ICRC, to consult the sister churches on these concerns, to publish the results and to state that the concerns raised may affect the FRCA's continuing membership in the ICRC. These concerns appear to center around whether there is real unity of faith between Reformed and Presbyterian churches, how the expression in the ICRC Constitution to seek the "fullest ecclesiastical fellowship" is to be interpreted, and the fact that previous FRCA synods "have hardly forwarded positive grounds for joining the ICRC." (For our comments on these concerns see the part of our report dealing with the ICRC.)
- e. Synod dealt with a request from the church of Kelmescott to include the word "Christian" in the Apostles' Creed. This was rejected.
- f. Under the heading of "Training for the Ministry," Synod decided to continue its support for our Theological College in Hamilton.
- g. Synod received a very extensive report on Bible Translations and declared that the NASB, NKJV and NIV are better translations than the RSV. It decided to charge new deputies with the task of dealing further with the former three translations, as well as to consult the sister churches on the feasibility of undertaking the task of translating the Bible.

3. Conclusion

From the correspondence received and from the Acts of Synod 1990, we may conclude with gratitude that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia continue to be faithful to the Word of the Lord, to the Confessions and to the adopted Church Order.

4. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends to General Synod 1992 that we continue to maintain a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia in accordance with the adopted rules.

V. THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS (RCN)

1. Correspondence

- a. After Synod 1989 met the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN), also called De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, were informed about the decisions taken that pertained to them, as well as other matters that had to do with inter-church relations generally. Copies of the Acts 1989 were sent as soon as they were received from the printer.
- b. We received a letter dated Oct. 16, 1989, inviting us to send delegates to the forthcoming Synod of Leeuwarden 1990. (Our Committee decided to do so and appointed the Revs. C. I. Stam and J. Visscher to attend this Synod; however, Synod Leeuwarden completed its agenda before anyone expected it would. The result was that your delegates had to decide whether to still travel to the Netherlands or not. After some further consultation with the Dutch deputies, as well as with the Scottish deputies, it was decided to proceed. In this way it would still be possible to have a fruitful meeting seeing that we would be dealing with Synod decisions and not just with proposals or recommendations to Synod that still would need to be adopted.)
- c. A letter sent by the Dutch deputies on March 19, 1990, was received informing us that they were recommending that the RCN enter into a sister church relationship with the Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS). They came to this decision as the result of the contacts they had with the Reformed Church of Zaire (RCZ) in which the RCUS is also active. Some further information about the RCUS was included. (See f. below about this matter, as well as that part of the Report dealing with the RCUS.)
The Deputies also asked whether we had discussed the document "Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church" authored by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
- d. On April 5, 1990, we sent our fraternal greetings and best wishes to Synod Leeuwarden and stated that the matter of personal delegation still needed to be decided.
- e. We received a letter from the Dutch deputies, dated April 12, 1990, dealing with a request which they had received via *Nederlands Dagblad* (Netherlands Daily – a Dutch Reformed newspaper) about an advertisement submitted by the Church at Ottawa. This ad asked Dutch readers for donations towards the building of a manse and/or church building.
Our Committee took up contact with the Church of Ottawa, received information from them, as well as a declaration from Classis Ontario-North endorsing this request. We informed the Dutch deputies that as far as we could determine the need was there.
- f. A letter was sent by us to the Dutch deputies on June 18, 1990, in which we state the following:
"In the first place, we were surprised and caught off-guard by your letter of March 19, 1990, in which you informed us that you had decided to recommend to Synod Leeuwarden that the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland enter into a sister church relation with the Reformed Church in the United States.
For our part we were not aware that your considerations had progressed to such a point and we regret that more consultation on this matter did not materialize.
This is not to imply that your recommendation was incorrect, for we have no definite reason to conclude that. We do, however, have some questions about the RCUS in relation to church discipline, Sunday worship (once per Lord's day), and theonomy. It might have been a wiser course

of action if you had sent a delegation to visit these churches instead of relying on indirect sources and impressions....”

This letter shows you that contrary to what the Acts of Synod Leeuwarden 1990 state we were not consulted before this relationship was offered to the RCUS. We were merely informed that a recommendation in this regard was being made to Synod Leeuwarden.

In addition, the letter also dealt with the financial request of the Church at Ottawa, as well as informing the Dutch deputies of our planned visit to the Netherlands from Sept.18-26, 1990.

- g. On March 4, 1991, we sent the Dutch deputies a copy of our proposed new rules that would be sent to Synod Lincoln 1992 and asked for their reactions. To date none have been received.

2. Acts of the General Synod of Leeuwarden 1990

- a. The Synod of Leeuwarden received visitors from the Free Church of Scotland (FCS), the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Free Reformed Church of the Philippines, and the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS).
- b. A number of appointments were made to the Theological University in Kampen. Synod appointed Drs.C.J. de Ruyter as lecturer in Diaconology and successor to Prof. Dr.C. Trimp. Dr.F. van der Pol (previously appointed as lecturer) was promoted to professor of Ecclesiology (the history of the early church and the middle ages). As part-time lecturers were appointed: Drs.C. Bijl (Homiletics), Dr.A.N. Hendriks (Poimenics), and Dr.J.R. Luth (Liturgics; church music).
- c. Regarding the support of needy students (Art. 19 C.O.), Synod maintained that the system of having national deputies for this fund, be continued. The Church Order was amended to reflect the change in the name of the Theological University (from College to University). No other changes were made.
- d. No changes were made with respect to the text of the Three Forms of Unity.
- e. Synod expressed agreement with the plans of the Dutch Bible Society (Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap – NBG) to come up with a revision of the 1951 translation (NV) and urged the NBG to insure “that a new translation renders the Holy Scriptures in a careful and trustworthy manner in contemporary Dutch, doing justice to the unity of the Scriptures and the reality that the translated Bible already functions for centuries within a confessing community.” The Deputies for Bible Translation are given the mandate to monitor the progress, to cooperate in this venture, and to report to the next General Synod on the developments.
Synod decided to maintain a decision of earlier Synods (Spakenburg and Heemse) to retain the old practice that elders do not give the benediction in the worship services.
- f. It was decided to ask the Deputies/Governors for Reformed Missionary Training (Gereformeerde Missiologische Opleiding – GMO) to investigate whether the missionary training can be expanded to include training for evangelism work (for ministers and others). The Deputies are asked to report to the next Synod on this matter.
- g. With respect to relations with churches abroad quite a number of decisions were made.
 - i. Rules for Correspondence: Synod decided to do away with the relationship known as “the temporary ecclesiastical contact relationship” and instead adopted newly-formulated “rules for sister church relationships.” (see Report of CRCA members to RCN, dated Sept.20, 1990, and attached.) The existing sister churches will be asked to continue their relationship with the Reformed Church in the Netherlands on the basis of the

- new rules. The matter will be discussed with those churches with whom a temporary contact relationship was established earlier.
- ii. Financial help foreign churches: Synod decided to request the Deputies for contact with churches abroad (BBK) to study whether it is responsible and feasible to give Deputies the mandate to offer help to foreign churches for theological training and educational work. Deputies were also given the right to give immediate financial assistance to foreign churches in case of need and to do this in consultation with the (mission) sending churches.
 - iii. Synod decided to continue sister church relationships with the following churches:
 - the Reformed Church of Sumba-Savu-Timor (plus sending to these churches an additional missionary lecturer for their theological training institution),
 - the Presbyterian Church in Korea,
 - the Canadian Reformed Churches,
 - the Free Reformed Churches in Australia,
 - the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland,
 - the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa.
 - iv. Synod decided to offer a sister church relationship to the following churches:
 - the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines,
 - the Free Church of Scotland,
 - the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland,
 - the Reformed Church in the United States,
 - the Reformed Church of Zaire.
 - v. Synod decided to establish (or continue) contacts with the following churches:
 - the Musyafir Churches (Timor),
 - the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapdong),
 - the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (First Presbytery),
 - the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (Second Presbytery),
 - the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka (with official support up to Fl. 20,000, if needed),
 - the Reformed Church of Japan,
 - the Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore,
 - the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore,
 - the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia,
 - the Reformed Churches of New Zealand,
 - the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (possibly intensifying these contacts),
 - the Presbyterian Association in England,
 - the Union of Evangelical Independent Reformed Churches of France,
 - the Greek Evangelical Church,
 - the Church of Christ Under the TIV (Nigeria),
 - the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Spain,
 - the Reformed Churches of South Africa,

Various Churches (e.g. in Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Eastern Australia, New Zealand, South Africa) will be visited by Deputies.
 - vi. Synod decided not to give the Deputies the mandate to initiate contact with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil.
 - vii. It is of interest to note that Synod decided to ask the Deputies (BBK) to raise with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin), the matter of maintaining discipline with regard to doctrine and the adhering to the church order, because questions have arisen on these points. But Synod did not consider that these matters were of sufficient weight to affect sister church relations.

viii. Regarding the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), Synod made various decisions regarding the meeting of the ICRC in Langley, B.C. (June 1989). The Deputies were given the mandate to co-operate in organizing the next meeting of the ICRC in the Netherlands, if the meeting cannot take place in Korea.

The Deputies were urged to place the following on the agenda of the ICRC: mission work (among the Jews), and a necessary "Christian Witness" to the world.

- h. The following highlights are passed on and deal with internal affairs:
- i. Synod received various Deputies from the Christian Reformed Churches (Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken – CGK). Disappointment was expressed that the CGK had rejected an appeal to come to ecclesiastical unity with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, mainly on the ground of perceived differences in doctrine (namely, the appropriation of salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in the preaching). Synod decided to appoint Deputies to continue contact with the CGK to seek further clarification of the differences so that it may be determined which obstacles must be removed to come to unity on the basis of the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity.
 - ii. Synod appointed Deputies to promote ecclesiastical unity in the Netherlands with the task to seek contacts with others who want to stand on the same basis of faith and, when asked, to advise local churches in making and maintaining contacts in their area.
 - iii. Synod reacted to a letter of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (also called GKN or GKN – synodical) in which regret was expressed over the wrong disciplinary measures taken in 1944 which led to the Liberation. Synod did not see in this letter a return to the truth of Scripture but a result of a wrong spirit of tolerance currently prevailing in the GKN. An answer was sent conveying the sentiments of Synod.

3. Considerations

- a. From the correspondence and the Acts of the General Synod of Leeuwarden, the Committee may gratefully conclude that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have shown faithfulness to God's Word and have abided by the Reformed Creeds and Church Order.
- b. Since the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have adopted new rules for sister church relationships with churches abroad, with the request that the relationship be continued in this way with the Canadian Reformed Churches, this request must be answered. The Committee is of the opinion that the new Dutch rules do not indicate any significant change in the relationship maintained until now and may well be accepted.
- c. Since the Dutch sister churches have entered into a sister church relationship with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), which churches are geographically closer to the Canadian Reformed Churches, Synod should consider giving the Committee on Relations With Churches Abroad (CRCA) the mandate to seek contact with the RCUS with respect to mutual recognition. The Committee should then present a comprehensive report on this matter to the next General Synod. (see also IX)

4. Recommendations

- a. Your Committee recommends that Synod continue to maintain a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in agreement with the new rules as suggested by Synod Leeuwarden 1990 and adapted by General Synod Lincoln 1992.
- b. Furthermore, your Committee recommends that it receive a mandate to seek contact with the Reformed Church in the United States with the purpose of investigating whether these churches may be recognized as sister churches.

VI. THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA (FRCSA)

1. Correspondence

- a. After our General Synod 1989 met the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA), also called Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika, were informed about the decisions taken that pertained to them, as well as other matters that had to do with inter-church relations generally. Copies of the Acts 1989 were sent as soon as they were received from the printer.
- b. On Feb.3, 1989, the South African deputies informed us that the Acts of Synod Johannesburg 1987 were on their way to us.
- c. On Feb. 6, 1990, a letter was sent informing us that Synod Capetown would meet from April 5 - 9, 1990. We sent them our best wishes on March 10, 1990.
- d. On Oct.2, 1990, we were sent an English summary of the proceedings of the General Synod of Capetown 1990, as well as a couple of copies of the Acts in the Afrikaans language.
- e. On Jan. 20, 1992, a letter was sent to us informing us that the next General Synod of the FRCSA would be held from April 29 - May 2, 1992. No place was mentioned. A letter expressing the blessings of the Lord was sent.

2. Acts of Synod Johannesburg 1987 and 1988

Synod Johannesburg met from October 9 - 13, 1987 and from May 12 - 14, 1988. Some of the highlights include:

- a. Synod decided to continue sister church relations with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Canadian Reformed Churches, and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. A relationship of ecclesiastical contact was continued with the Reformed Churches on Sumba-Savu and the Presbyterian Church in Korea.
- b. Synod spent a great deal of time dealing with the revision of the South African Church Book: confessions, forms, church order.
- c. Synod took note of the growth that was being experienced in connection with the mission work in Belhar.
- d. A letter was sent to the Reformed Churches in South Africa dealing with the outstanding issues between RCSA and the FRCSA.
- e. It was decided to take up ecclesiastical contact with the Free Church of South Africa in the same manner as this is done with several foreign churches.
- f. Synod decided in favour of an overture of the church at Capetown and declared that it is not necessary for an elder to change the salutation and benediction from "you" to "us."
- g. Synod decided to have the English Form for Marriage translated and to use this as a basis for a South African form. In the process the Deputies were told to leave out the reference to Christ's presence at the marriage feast in Cana and to include the full text of Ps. 128: 1, 2.

3. Acts of Synod Capetown 1990

Synod Capetown met from April 4 - 9, 1990. All three churches, Capetown, Johannesburg, and Pretoria were legally represented. Also present was the Rev. A.J. Visser, missionary of the Dutch church of Drachten Southeast. We mention the following decisions and events because they are of interest to our churches:

- 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 Church-

es in Sumba-Savu, the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and the Free Church of South Africa.

- c. With respect to the International Conference of Reformed Churches, Synod judged the speech of Prof. Dr.J. Douma, regarding the subject "Apartheid" too narrow in its scope. "The subject should have been, for example, 'The responsibilities of the church regarding the social and political structures of the society it stands in.'" Synod decided to send two delegates to the ICRC in Seoul (1993).
- d. Synod decided not to go so far as to recognize the Reformed Churches of South Africa as a true church, but to ask for a clear memorandum on the main differences with the RCSA. It also decided to mandate new delegates "to participate on behalf of our churches in interdenominational gatherings to which we are invited and where matters regarding the FRCSA are discussed or where we might give a contribution which has a testimonial character; to reflect on the practical application of contact with churches with whom contact is considered significant; and to implement such contact."
- e. Synod decided to adopt the recommendation of delegates not to pronounce its judgment about the definite approval or disapproval of the New Afrikaans Bible (NAB).
- f. The new 1987 translation of the three Ecumenical Articles of Faith and the Three Forms of Unity was made available for use in the churches.
- g. A new committee was appointed to review the liturgical forms. The final text is to be published in a booklet with the new text of the Church Order and the alternative Order of Service.
- h. Synod accepted the recommendation of the delegates appointed by the previous Synod to return to the Order of Service from the 16th century and recommended an order for the morning and evening service.
- i. Although the churches would like to keep the Genevan melodies, it was questioned whether that was possible in such a small federation. Synod decided to refer the matter of the melodies back to the church at Pretoria with a request to study the prerequisites of the choice of melodies and rhythms and to spell out the consequences of the acceptance of the Afrikaans Psalm Book of 1987.

4. Consideration

From the correspondence and the Acts received, we may conclude, with gratitude, that the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) desires to be faithful to the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions, and the Church Order.

5. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends to General Synod 1992 that we continue to maintain a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa in accordance with the adopted rules.

VII. THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA (PCK)

1. Context

General Synod Winnipeg 1989, following in the line of many previous synods (Burlington, Cloverdale, Smithville, Coaldale), charged the Committee to continue to deal with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK) with a view to establishing a sister church relationship with them. Due to the fact that all the outstanding issues between our churches and the Korean churches had been dealt with, but that communication remained a problem, Synod 1989 instructed us "to be diligent regarding the matter of communication" (Acts 1989, Art. 103, D, 2).

With a view to these communication difficulties, two members of the Committee, namely the Revs. Cl. Stam and J. Visscher spoke with Prof. Dr. Ho Jin Jun of the PCK at the last meeting of the ICRC held in Langley, B.C. from June 19 - 28, 1989. We explained our difficulties to him and he supplied us with some insight into how this situation had come about. It appears that up until then the PCK had the custom of appointing a new secretary to their Fraternal Relations Committee on an annual basis. The result was that a new secretary hardly had an opportunity to adjust to his task and then he would be replaced with a new one. In addition, it appears that the qualifications for secretary did not always take into account the ability to communicate in the English language.

We explained to Dr. Ho Jin Jun that this kind of setup would make it very difficult for us ever to overcome our communications problem. We informed him that the inability to communicate would hinder the establishment of a sister church relationship with our churches. As a result, he promised to recommend certain changes to the General Assembly of the PCK. Obviously he has followed through on his word for since that meeting we have had no lack of correspondence from the PCK.

2. Correspondence

- a. On July 20, 1989, the Fraternal Relations Committee of the PCK invited us to send a fraternal delegate to their 39th General Assembly meeting in Masan, Korea from Sept. 18 - 22, 1989. We replied to their Committee on Sept. 5, 1989, thanking them for their invitation but telling them that the absence of an official relationship between our respective churches prevented us from sending a delegate. We expressed the hope that communications would improve and pave the way to a sister church relationship. We also gave the PCK some information about our churches, as requested by them. In a separate letter to the General Assembly we extended to them our best wishes and stressed the matter of communication once again.
- b. On Feb. 1990, the Korean deputies informed us that they were considering the possibility of establishing fraternal relations with us. We replied on March 5, 1990, and pointed out that our next Synod would not be meeting until the fall of 1992.
- c. On March 27, 1990, the Korean deputies told us that they had received two copies of the Acts of General Synod 1989 and requested our prayers for their churches.
- d. On April 17, 1990, the Korean deputies wrote us that they had decided to recommend to their General Assembly that sister relations be established with us.
- e. On June 27, 1990, the Korean deputies again asked us to send a delegate, this time to the 40th General Assembly meeting in Taegu, Korea from Sept. 17 - 21, 1990. We replied with a letter on July 13, 1990 reiterating that we would not be in a position to send a delegate seeing that Synod had not yet given us instruction in the matter of a mutual relationship. Nevertheless, we extended to them our hope that the Lord would see fit to bless their Assembly.
- f. On Oct. 10, 1990, the Korean deputies sent us an English summary of some of the highlights of their 40th General Assembly. This summary includes the following:
 - the decision to appoint a full-time General Secretary for the PCK;
 - a proposal to enlarge the Seoul seminary is being studied;
 - because the Korean version of the Apostles' Creed did not include the phrase "descended into hell," it was decided that the Theological Committee should study this matter;
 - financial support by the churches was set at \$230,000 U.S. for the Seminary and \$107,000 US for the College;
 - as a first stage of missionary outreach to China it was decided to provide

training for laymen leaders among the Koreans in China when they visit Korea;

- the youth ministry department of the Church (Students for Christ) already has quite a few staff workers, but it was decided at the Assembly that every Presbytery should appoint full-time staff workers for ministry in high schools and university campuses in their Presbytery and be responsible for their full support.
 - the 40th General Assembly also decided to establish “brother and sister relations” with the Canadian Reformed Churches.
- g. Another letter dated Oct. 10, 1990, was also received from Korea in which the deputies thanked us for our letter of best wishes and stressed that their General Assembly had decided to establish “brother and sister church relations” with us. In addition, they suggest that we formulate an agreement in English that can be signed at the appropriate time.
- h. On Nov. 15, 1990, we received a beautiful booklet in English from the PCK providing us with information on their history, organizational principles and standards, constituency, institutions, home and foreign missions, church education, literature activities and cooperation with other church bodies. Seeing that we have only one copy of this booklet, we shall send it to Synod Lincoln to peruse.
- i. In Dec. 1990, we received another beautiful publication. This time it was a Christmas card from the Seminary wishing us the best of the season and informing us that their enrollment had increased to 382 students.
- j. In July 3, 1991, the Korean deputies wrote us and invited us to send a delegate to their 41st General Assembly meeting in Pusan from Sept. 23 - 27, 1991. We replied once again that we were waiting for Synod 1992 and wished them God’s blessing over their Assembly.
- k. In Dec. 1991, we received another Christmas card from the Seminary in Pusan. For the academic year 1991 348 students had enrolled.
- l. In April 1992, we received a letter from the Korean deputies, dated: March 30, 1992, informing us about the major decisions of the 1991 General Assembly of the PCK. These decisions deal with such matters as: the addition of a presbytery; the appointment of study committees on divorce and remarriage, the baptism of the Holy Spirit; placing mission societies under the guidance of the General Assembly; purchasing a seminary site in the middle of Korea; financial support to 47 PCK ministers serving as army chaplains; accepting the modernization of the language and structure of the constitution of the church.

3. Considerations

- a. In light of the above, it is clear that the communications problem with the PCK has been resolved, thanks for a large part to the good offices and efforts of Dr. Ho Jin Jun, Chairman of the Fraternal Relations Committee.
- b. The matter of communication was cited by Synod 1989 as an obstacle to offering the PCK a sister church relationship.
- c. The PCK decided at their 40th General Assembly to enter into a sister church relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

4. Recommendations

- a. To offer the Presbyterian Church in Korea a sister church relationship called “Ecclesiastical Fellowship” and to do so under the rules adopted by Synod 1992.
- b. To recommend that Synod call on Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Professor of Dogmatology at the Theological College, if Synod wishes to have more infor-

mation on the PCK. Prof Gootjes served for more than ten years as a professor at the PCK Seminary in Pusan, Korea.

- c. Upon recognition of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, seeing the many requests received from the PCK and their stated desire to formalize the relationship in a solemn ceremony at the appropriate time, Synod decide that the next General Assembly of the PCK be visited by two delegates, to wit Dr.N.H. Gootjes, former professor at Pusan, and Dr.J. Visscher, convener-secretary of the Committee.

VIII. THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND (FCS)

1. Context

General Synod 1986 mandated our Committee to take up contact with the Free Church of Scotland and General Synod 1989 continued this charge. In an attempt to fulfill this mandate our Committee has had contact with the FCS through its delegates to the ICRC at Langley, B.C. from June 19 - 28, 1990. In addition your Committee instructed the Revs. Cl. Stam and J. Visscher to visit the FCS in connection with their trip to the Netherlands. This visit to Scotland took place from Sept. 13 -18, 1990. For a report of that visit we refer you to our article in *Clarion* of Jan. 18, 1991, which contains our report of this visit. It has been appended to this Report.

2. Correspondence

- a. In Sept. 1989 we received the Acts of the General Assembly held in May 1989.
- b. In Sept. 1990 we received the Acts of the General Assembly held in May 1990.
- c. In Sept. 1991 we received the Acts of the General Assembly held in May 1991.
- d. On Feb. 6, 1990 the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton informed us that the FCS had a congregation (actually it was an unofficial group) in Edmonton and asked our advice in taking up contact with it. We replied on June 18, 1990, that we had no objection to their taking up contact with this group. Since then no further details have reached us.
- e. On Feb. 5, 1991, the Committee on Ecumenical Relations of the FCS sent us a letter requesting a copy of our regulations for inter-church relations, as well as "some account of the discussions between your Church and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A., with particular reference to points of difference and divergence that emerged."
- f. On March 4, 1991, we sent to the Scottish deputies a copy of our present Rules for Correspondence, a copy of our proposed rules to Synod 1992 (see Section XIII of this Report), and a copy of the Report of our Committee for Contact with the OPC, dated October 13th, 1978. The last item had been referred to in the discussions held in Edinburgh between our Committee members and theirs. It also represents the most thorough statement to date on the nature of the "divergencies" between the CRC and the OPC.
- g. The Acts of the 1991 General Assembly include the following statements:
"Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. Cl. Stam met with representatives of the Committee and others both in Edinburgh and in Glasgow. Correspondence continues so as to clarify the conditions on which closer relations can be achieved. The Canadian Reformed Churches have adopted a code of regulations with regard to what they term sister-Church relations. Inter-Church relations have not been so strictly defined and regulated on our side. Negotiations continue...
"The General Assembly are encouraged to learn of continuing fraternal relations with Churches abroad. They await the outcome of discussions with Churches in the Dutch tradition desirous of securing sister-Church rela-

tions. They charge the Committee to report progress on these matters to next General Assembly.” (p.4, 5)

- h. On Feb. 6, 1992, the Scottish deputies wrote and assured us that the matter of inter-church relations continued to have their attention and that proposals were being formulated to the next General Assembly in May 1992 and that these proposals would also be sent to us.
- i. On May 27, 1992, the deputies informed us that the General Assembly had accepted the recommendation of its Committee in the matter of inter-church relations. The Assembly’s decision on “Fraternal Relations Between Churches” reads, in part, as follows:

“There should be one simple rule to the following effect.

Fraternal Relations should exist between Churches that openly and practically profess the true faith of Christ as summarised in one or more of the classical Reformed symbols – ie the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgian Confession, the Canons of the Synod of Dort.”

Thereafter the Assembly proceeded to state the “duties and courtesies” (or rules) that are to govern these relations. (For a complete copy of the decision, see the appendices)

3. Considerations

- a. Your Committee has studied the history, background, doctrinal standards and their maintenance, church government and practice of the FCS. We have done so by acquainting ourselves with their history (see our Report to Synod 1986). We have done so by reading and studying the Acts of the General Assembly 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991. We have taken note of an extensive report of the Dutch deputies sent to Synod Heemse 1984 and found in the Acts 1984, pp.57-69, of a report made by the Australian deputies who visited Scotland and reported to Synod Armadale 1989 (see Acts 1989 Winnipeg, pp.159-166), of a report made by Prof. Dr. K. Deddens who visited Scotland in June of 1987 and which can be found in the Acts 1989 (Appendix I A, pp.155-159). Two members of our Committee, as well as Prof. Dr.J. Faber, visited Edinburgh in 1985 in conjunction with the first ICRC and experienced church life firsthand, as well as meeting and conversing with many members of the FCS. Finally, in 1990 two members of our Committee visited the FCS again and were confirmed and established in our earlier impressions and evaluation. The sum total of all of these reports and visits indicates that in the FCS we have to do with a faithful Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- b. The fact that our sister churches in Australia and the Netherlands have come to the same conclusion supports the assessment of your Committee.
- c. A relationship with the Free Church of Scotland will also have a bearing on our relations with the four Free Church congregations in Canada, namely one in Toronto and three in Prince Edward Island; and may prove to be a mutual blessing.
- d. The view that the only proper approach to FCS congregations in Canada is to demand that a merger take place as a condition for recognition, does not do full justice to the historic roots and ecclesiastical practices of our respective churches. While unity in faith and practice should be an aim that is continually kept in view and worked toward, there must also be an awareness that this will come about only as the result of growing understanding, patient dealing, increased familiarity, and constant prayer.
- e. Your Committee has studied the decision made by the 1992 General Assembly on the matter of inter-church relations and is pleased to inform Synod that after some years of contact on this matter our discussions have borne

fruit. Until now the Free Church has always exercised its relations with other churches in a less structured manner, but it has become convinced that its relations require a more defined character.

It should be noted that although the Assembly speaks of “fraternal relations,” this designation is not to be confused with what is commonly called “fraternal relations” on the North American continent. Among certain Presbyterian churches in North America “fraternal relations” commonly indicates only a statement of mutual recognition and the exchange of fraternal delegates. What the FCS has adopted is similar to our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (or correspondence) in that it includes rules relating to mutual helpfulness and confessional watchfulness, exchange of attestations, pulpit access, visiting delegates to major assemblies, and the exchange of Acts.

4. Recommendations

- a. To offer to the Free Church of Scotland a sister church relationship called “Ecclesiastical Fellowship” and to do so under the rules adopted by Synod 1992.
- b. To recommend to the churches of Classis Ontario-North that the Free Church congregations in Toronto and PEI be invited to attend Classis in an advisory capacity.

IX THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES (RCUS)

1. Context

In March of 1987 your Committee learned that the Dutch deputies had taken up contact with the RCUS. They sent us copies of the pertinent correspondence and a copy of the minutes of a meeting they had with the Rev. Robert Grossman of the RCUS. We passed on copies of this information to the church at Carman because we were informed that they had some contact with a few RCUS congregations in the Dakotas. Further developments in this matter can be deciphered from the correspondence cited below.

2. Correspondence

- a. The church at Carman sent us a letter on Feb. 15, 1989, and enclosed reports of two visits on Oct. 28, 1987, and Oct. 20, 1988. With respect to the first visit the Rev. P.K.A. de Boer and Br. H. Veenendaal visited the RCUS in Minot, North Dakota and met with Rev. G. Syms, minister of Minot, and Rev. R. Bass, minister of the RCUS at Upham. With respect to the second visit the Rev. G. Syms visited the Consistory of the church at Carman, Manitoba.
- b. The church at Carman sent us a letter on Oct. 9, 1989, suggesting that the Dutch deputies be informed of their contacts with the RCUS and that the Dutch deputies keep the church of Carman informed of their contact with the RCUS. We also received a copy of a report of a visit made from Sept. 27 - 29, 1989, by Rev. P.K.A. de Boer and Elder H. Veenendaal to RCUS congregations in Upham and Hosmer.
- c. Your Committee sent a letter to the church at Carman, dated June 18, 1990, in which we informed the consistory of the fact that the Dutch sister churches had decided to enter into a sister church relationship with the RCUS. We added that two members of our Committee were going to the Netherlands and would discuss the Dutch decision in detail. We also stated that our Committee, while being appreciative of the efforts and reports received from the church at Carman, was of the opinion that in light of the contents of these reports and the action of our Dutch sister churches the time had come to approach Synod Lincoln 1992 in order to ask for a mandate to com-

mence official synodical contact with the RCUS.

- d. On Sept. 7, 1990, the church at Carman sent us a letter in which they disagreed with our decision to ask Synod Lincoln 1992 for a mandate to take up contact with the RCUS with a view to establishing a sister church relationship.
- e. On Nov. 30, 1990, our Committee responded to the Sept. 7, 1990, letter of the church at Carman and re-affirmed its decision to bring this matter to the attention of General Synod Lincoln 1992. (We have appended copies of these letters.)
- f. On Jan. 11, 1991, the Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCUS invited us to send an observer to the 1991 Synod that was scheduled to meet in Garner, Iowa, from April 2 - 5, 1991.
- g. On March 4, 1991, we sent a letter to the RCUS deputies and informed them that we had no mandate from General Synod 1989 to accept their invitation but would refer this matter to the forthcoming Synod 1992.
- h. On July 23, 1991, we received a letter from the RCUS deputies informing us that Synod 1991 of the RCUS would like to establish fraternal relations with our churches and will be sending an observer to Synod Lincoln 1992. The letter was accompanied by various documents: The Constitution of the RCUS, a brochure entitled "The Reformed Church in the United States" and a copy of the 1991 Abstract of the Minutes of the 245th Synod.
- i. On February 6, 1992, the Convener of our Committee, Dr. J. Visscher received a phone call from the Rev. J. Merica, Chairman of the Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCUS, inviting us to send an observer to the forthcoming RCUS Synod in Minot, South Dakota, scheduled to meet from April 20 - 23, 1992. Once again we had to decline the invitation because it is not part of our mandate.
- j. On March 16, 1992, the Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCUS invited us to send an observer to the 246th Annual Synodical meeting to be convened on April 20, 1992. We informed them, as always, that we were unable to do so seeing that we lack a synodical mandate. They also asked for a letter of recommendation from us to accompany their application to join the ICRC. We informed them that such a letter was not needed seeing that Art.IV of the ICRC Constitution applies to them and not Art.VII, 1, e, of the Regulations.

3. Considerations

- a. As a result of the above-mentioned requests and developments, your Committee has come to the conclusion that serious consideration must be given by Synod 1992 to the matter of initiating contact with the RCUS.
- b. The church at Carman is of the opinion that such a step is premature (see correspondence). Although they have many positive things to say about the RCUS, they believe that further local discussions are necessary.
- c. Your Committee is of the opinion that the approach of the church at Carman operates on the premise that the RCUS is not a foreign church but a local church. As a result they feel that a sister church relationship is not sufficient but that full ecclesiastical unity has to be the aim (see their letter dated Sept.7, 1990).

For our part, we believe that the RCUS is not a local church but a federation of foreign churches. The facts that the brothers in Carman have to cross the border into the U.S.A. and travel a considerable distance to visit a RCUS congregation and that none of our American congregations live in close proximity with any RCUS congregation confirms this.

- d. Your Committee has supported the efforts of the church at Carman but is of the opinion that after initial contacts and evaluations have been made at the local level, it is time to present the request of the RCUS to the General Synod.
- e. Your Committee has also taken note of an article published by the Rev. P.K.A.

de Boer in *Clarion* (January 4, 1991) entitled “Contact with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS).” It has also taken note of another article by Rev. R. Grossman of the RCUS entitled “The RCUS, a View from the Inside” (see *Clarion*, May 10, 1991). This exchange of articles shows that at a number of points the evaluation of the RCUS is disputed. This supports our view that the time has come to refer this matter to Synod.

4. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends that Synod 1992 respond to the requests of the Reformed Church in the United States for an official relationship by mandating the Committee on Relations With Churches Abroad (CRCA) to investigate the RCUS with a view to entering into a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with it and to report its findings to the next General Synod.

X. THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA (RCSA)

1. Context

On July 25, 1991, the Reformed Churches in South Africa [RCSA, also called Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA)] sent us a letter in which they stated that it had come to their attention that a relationship of church unity (correspondence) existed between ourselves and the Presbyterian Church in Korea, a church with which they currently have correspondence. They requested that we inform them of our confessional basis and church government in order that they might make a recommendation to their next synod about a relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

For their part they state that they hold to the Three Forms of Unity, have a system of church government based on the Church Order of Dordt. In addition, they mention that as of 1988 they have suspended their membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC, formerly RES) due to the unscriptural approaches regarding the authority of Scripture and homosexuality that is accepted in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN, also commonly referred to among us as the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – synodical), a member of the REC.

We wrote them back in February, 1992, and informed them that as yet no official relationship of correspondence (or ecclesiastical fellowship) existed between ourselves and the Presbyterian Church in Korea but that such a relationship was being proposed by our Committee to Synod Lincoln 1992. In light of these developments and as a common courtesy, we decided to send them information about the Canadian Reformed Churches and took note of the information that they had sent to us.

2. Considerations

- a. Should General Synod Lincoln 1992 decide to recognize the Presbyterian Church in Korea as a sister church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, we shall have to address the matter of our relationship with the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA).
- b. The results of any and all contact with the RCSA will have to take into account that we currently have sister church relations with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA). This means that we shall have to consult the FRCSA and work in concert with them. We note from the Acts of Synod Capetown 1990 of the FRCSA and from various published sources that the relationship between the FRCSA and the RCSA is a matter of ongoing study and consideration.

3. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends to Synod that if General Synod 1992 decides to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea, a study should be undertaken of the Reformed Churches in South Africa and the results forwarded to the next General Synod.

XI. THE REFORMED CHURCH IN ZAIRE (RCZ)

1. Context

For some time already our sister churches in the Netherlands have been involved in Zaire. This involvement began, as far as we know, through the activities of *De Verre Naasten* (Distant Neighbours), an organization that extends social and economic aid to believers in foreign countries. As the result of these contacts and a study done by the Dutch deputies, Synod Leeuwarden 1990 decided to offer the Reformed Church of Zaire a sister church relationship and pledged to give considerable financial support to this church.

2. Correspondence

- a. On June 27, 1991, a letter was sent to us by the Rev. Kazadi Lukonda Ngube-Ngube, Moderator and Legal Representative of the Reformed Church in Zaire (RCZ), asking us to establish a sister church relationship with the RCZ. He informed us that the RCZ has the Three Forms of Unity as their confessional basis. It currently has 70 congregations in various parts of Zaire. He also gave us information about the great need that exists in his churches for ecclesiastical and financial assistance.
- b. On Jan.7, 1992, we received another letter from the Rev. Kazadi Lukonda Ngube-Ngube asking about our reaction to their letter of June 27, 1991, and pleaded with us to help them in various projects and to send them missionaries.
- c. In February of 1992 we responded to their letters informing them that we could not deal with their request for a sister church relationship but would bring it to the attention of General Synod Lincoln 1992 and that we had passed on their request for financial and economic aid to the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund.

3. Considerations

- a. In light of the request of the RCZ for a sister church relationship, it is only proper that their overture to the Canadian Reformed Churches be weighed carefully and responded to after due study.
- b. In light of their urgent request and the great need in this African church, it behooves the Canadian Reformed Churches as churches of our Lord Jesus Christ to be sensitive to their entreaties and to deal with their request in as speedy and charitable a manner as possible.
- c. In light of their plea for missionary assistance, the churches should be informed and communications exchanged with our Dutch sister churches as to how this plea can best be answered.
- d. The fact that the RCUS is in a sister church relationship with the Reformed Church in Zaire and is assisting the RCZ, underlines the need for Synod to address the matter of our relationship with the RCUS.

4. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that General Synod 1992 mandate it to take up contact with the Reformed Church in Zaire with a view to establishing a sister church relationship with the RCZ.

XII. 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 Constituent Assembly which met in Groningen, the Netherlands, from Oct. 26 - Nov. 4, 1982, to the first official meeting of the ICRC in Edinburgh, Scotland, from Sept. 3 - 13, 1985, and to the second official meeting held in Langley, B.C., Canada, from June 19 - 28, 1989. The third official meeting, which was to take place in Seoul, Korea, has been shifted to Zwolle, the Netherlands, and is tentatively scheduled to meet there from Aug. 31 - Sept. 10, 1993.

2. Correspondence

- a. On December 3, 1990, the Secretary of the ICRC, the Rev. M. van Beveren, sent us a letter in which he asked for information in order to compile a Directory for ICRC member churches. Information was forwarded.
- b. On Feb. 1, 1991, the Secretary sent us an updated address list of member churches.
- c. On May 1, 1991, the Secretary sent us a Newsletter informing us that the 1993 Conference will have as theme: Issues Facing the Church Today. Among the topics mentioned but not yet finalized were marriage and divorce, preaching, theonomy, prophecy today, women in office. The newsletter mentioned that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has applied for membership in the ICRC. Several changes were made in the Committee on Theological Affirmation which now consists of Prof. Dr. J. Faber (convener), Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Prof. F.S. Leahy, Prof. D. Macleod. The Committee of Missions includes Rev.W. Boessenkool, Prof. A.C. Boyd, Prof. Dr.K. Deddens, Prof. C.J. Haak (convener), Prof. Dr. Ho Jin Jun, and Rev.W.D.J. McKay. Member churches were also reminded that amendments to the Constitution should be sent to the Secretary two years before the meeting of the Conference.
- d. On Nov. 8, 1991, the Secretary sent us another Newsletter in which he informed us that the 1993 meeting of the Conference could not be held in Seoul, Korea. It appears that the PCK could not obtain permission from the Korean government to build a new seminary in Seoul. This leaves them without suitable facilities to house the Conference. The consequence is that the alternate host, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, has been called upon and found willing to host the next meeting of the Conference in September of 1993.
- e. In January of 1992, we received a Directory of the ICRC from the Secretary giving us pertinent information (confessional basis, history, government, statistics, theological training, mission work, interchurch relations, publications, etc.) about the member churches.

3. The Second Meeting of the ICRC in Langley, B.C.

- a. The Second Meeting of the Conference took place in the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, B.C. from June 19 - 28, 1989.
- b. For details of the meeting we refer you to *The Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches*, June 19 - 28, 1989.
- c. The delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches to the meeting were the Revs. Cl. Stam and J. Visscher, with Prof. Dr.J. Faber and Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam as advisors. That there was good Canadian Reformed involvement is evident from the fact that Dr.J. Visscher was chosen to act as Chairman, the Rev.M. van Beveren acted as Corresponding Secretary, br. H.A. Berends was re-appointed as Treasurer, speeches were delivered by Prof. Dr. K. Deddens, Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam, and Dr. J. Visscher. Rev. Cl. Stam was chosen

as substitute for the Corresponding Secretary, Prof. Dr. K. Deddens was appointed to the Committee on Missions, Prof. Dr. J. Faber was appointed as Convener of the Committee on Theological Affirmation, and Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes was later added to this Committee as well.

- d. The delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches were mandated to propose that certain changes be made to the Constitution and By-Laws of the ICRC. These changes pertain to the fact that Synod 1986 wanted to have a stipulation in the Basis saying that delegates subscribe only to the standards of their particular churches, that membership in the RES is an impediment to membership in the ICRC and that the article dealing with the advisory character of conclusions of the Conference be amended.
- e. With regard to amending the Basis of the Constitution, the meeting decided not to accept such an amendment. The Canadian delegates who proposed it had the support of the Australian delegates from the FRCA but not of our sister church delegates from the Netherlands or South Africa, nor from the other delegations.

The reason for this was that the other delegations were of the opinion that such a stipulation was unnecessary, since it should be commonly understood that the relationship of member churches and their delegates to the Basis is not one of subscribing in the sense of a formal act of subscription, but one of subscribing in the sense of recognition. In other words, in accepting the Basis we recognize that the Confessions mentioned there are Reformed in character and should function as the doctrinal underpinnings of the ICRC. That certain member churches may have difficulties with the way in which some points of doctrine in these confessions are expressed is granted, but such difficulties are not deemed to be of such a nature that recognition and cooperation are impossible.

The *Proceedings* on pp. 30 -31, and elsewhere, indicate that the delegates were by and large convinced that our proposal rested on a misunderstanding and that it would be bad precedent to legislate because of a misunderstanding. The point was repeatedly made that “ ‘Subscription’ is what is required of officebearers by their own churches” (p.30).

In connection with this it should be mentioned that the delegates from our sister church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, had originally proposed that the delegates express their agreement with the Basis by rising. Since the Dutch sister churches follow this practice at their General Synods and thereby re-affirm their official subscription to the Confessions, it was felt that such an action at the meeting of the Conference would convey the wrong impression and send a message that delegates were acting like delegates to a major assembly instead of to a conference. It also would once again confuse the distinction between recognition of the Basis and subscription to the Basis. As a result, the Dutch delegates withdrew their amendment. (see *Proceedings*, p. 11)

One final observation should be made on this matter and that is that it is actually impossible to regard the Basis as being a matter of formal subscription because of the fact that all of the conclusions of the Conference are advisory in character. No one can be confessionally bound to an advisory body such as the ICRC and no delegate or member church can be bound to conclusions that are advisory in nature.

- f. With regard to amending the Constitution to declare that membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council [REC, formerly the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES)], the meeting decided not to adopt such a change. The Canadian delegates had the support only of the FRCA delegates. Once again the *Proceedings* (pp.14, 15) shed light on the decision. A majority of the delegates were of the opinion that an amendment such as this was

both unnecessary and unmanageable. It was considered unnecessary because the Constitution **already states** that churches applying for membership shall not be “members of the World Council of Churches **or any other organization** whose aims and practices are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis.” (Constitution, Art. IV, 1, d) It was considered unmanageable because of the problems it would create in “drawing up lists of organizations: Where do you stop? Whom do you include? How often do you update” (*Proceedings*, p.15).

- g. With regard to amending Article V of the Constitution dealing with the nature of Conference conclusions, it was adopted unanimously. In this connection, amendments proposed by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Free Church of Scotland and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands were adopted (see *Proceedings*, pp.15 - 17)
- h. It should also be reported that throughout your delegates functioned together in good harmony. The only difference of opinion that emerged had to do with whether the meeting should appoint a Committee for Theological Affirmation to deal with a request from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. This member church had encountered differences with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and was in favour of having the ICRC develop “an agreed statement as to what constitutes a ‘true church’ and the consequences of such for intercommunion, etc.” (see *Proceedings*, p.53)
One of your delegates was of the opinion that an agreed statement was unnecessary seeing that the Belgic Confession already defines what is a true church. The other delegate was of the opinion that although this may be true, it might be beneficial to have the implications of this worked out in so far as they touch on intercommunion and other areas of difference.
In light of our disagreement, we decided that the best course of action was to abstain from voting on the matter. The Conference discussed the matter further and decided to appoint such a Committee and give it a mandate. For your information, both Profs. Faber and Gootjes are on this Committee.
- i. On a different note, it may be reported that this meeting of the Conference was blessed with many visitors and that members of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the Fraser Valley and beyond were frequently in attendance. In particular the members of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley were delighted to be able to host the meeting and have since then often expressed the desire to do so again. Their warm hospitality to the delegates and their enthusiastic support deserve to be mentioned.
- j. After the meeting of the Conference there has been some polemics in the press about the ICRC: how it came into existence, the involvement of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the relationship of member churches to the Basis, etc.

4. Considerations

- a. Although not all of our amendments to the Constitution were adopted, the discussions at the meeting of the Conference indicate that our concerns have been aired, debated and understood. The discussions as reported in the *Proceedings* also indicate that further clarification on these points has been forthcoming. The result is that the integrity of our churches is not jeopardized by our being a member of the Conference.
- b. The fact that membership in the Conference is voluntary and that its conclusions are advisory means that the Conference does not undermine our subscription to the Three Forms of Unity. Mutual recognition does not mean the same as official subscription.
- c. Our membership in the ICRC has up till now been subject to a process of on-going review and this policy should be continued. Our participation in

- the Conference should be one of full cooperation and continued evaluation.
- d. The fear that some have voiced that the ICRC will become a super-Synod has not proven to be real. The meetings and the functioning of the ICRC thus far have shown that, as its name suggests, it really is a **Conference** of Reformed Churches. It is a forum in which faithful churches of our Lord from around the world can meet together and discuss matters of mutual concern and explore ways to assist each other.
 - e. It may be noted that the Churches of our Lord in the Western world (Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Scotland) have developed a great deal as far as internal organization and structure is concerned, as well as regards institutions and resources. In addition, they have also had centuries of experience when it comes to defining their position on various doctrinal issues. The Churches of our Lord in other parts of the world are often young, in the process of organizing, limited in resources and institutions, as well as struggling with doctrinal issues. This is not to say that they are inferior, for in terms of their commitment and enthusiasm for the faith, they put many long established churches to shame. Recognizing that this kind of situation exists today means that the churches who have received so much also have a responsibility to share their wealth, experience and manpower. The ICRC creates a forum that can serve to facilitate such sharing and so promote good stewardship among the churches.

5. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that the Canadian Reformed Churches continue to participate in the ICRC and that it report to the next General Synod, giving a report and evaluation of the Conference to the next General Synod.

Your Committee recommends that the Canadian Reformed Churches be represented at the next meeting of the Conference scheduled to take place in Zwolle, the Netherlands during the month of September 1993.

It recommends that the Revs. Cl. Stam and J. Visscher be sent as voting delegates and that Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes be appointed as advisor (Prof Dr. J. Faber will be there as Convener of the Committee on Theological Affirmation; Rev. M. van Beveren will be there as Secretary of the ICRC.)

XIII. RULES FOR ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP

The Acts of previous Synods, as well as the past reports of this Committee, indicate that the matter of the Rules for Correspondence have been the subject of a long and extensive discussion. Many letters have been exchanged by the sister churches on this topic. The Convener of our Committee, Dr.J. Visscher, has introduced this subject twice at different meetings of the ICRC and considerable discussion followed. The members of our Committee who visited the Netherlands and Scotland in 1990 dealt with it in both places.

The result of all of this attention is that as Committee we have come to a certain conclusion on the matter. To explain this conclusion, it is necessary first to take note of our present rules. (They can be found on the opening pages of this Report.) It is also necessary to consider the latest rules adopted by the Synod of Leeuwarden of our Dutch sister churches.(They can be found in the appendix under the report of the visit with the Dutch deputies on Sept.20, 1990.)

One other factor comes into play in this matter and that has to do with the order and the character of our first rule. At the last meeting of the ICRC, a number of delegates and advisors from members churches criticized the negative character of our first rule. Prof. Dr.J. van Bruggen of the Netherlands in particular went on record as stating that this rule as presently stated is too one-sided and needed to be balanced out. The Deputies of the Free Church of Scotland agreed with

this criticism and informed us in their letter of March 11, 1992, commenting on our rules, that “the order of rules – the priority given to watching out for aberrations – suggests an inquisitorial and judgmental attitude. This may not be intended but it is, unfortunately, quite patent.” In their newly adopted rules they have made a concerted attempt to avoid such an approach.

Your Committee has taken these concerns into account and proposes a re-structuring of our first rule in such a way that the duty to watchfulness is augmented by the duty to render assistance.

We would propose that Synod adopt the following new rules for the exercise of our inter-church relations. On the whole they remain basically an adaptation of the Dutch rules. They read as follows:

1. The churches shall as much as possible assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy.
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 inform each other when entering into relations with third parties.
4. The churches shall accept one another's attestations or certificates of good standing, which also means admitting members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation or certificate.
5. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches.

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

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

1. Comment:

- a. A comparison of our present Rules with these proposed Rules shows that no radical overhaul is being proposed. All of the main components of our present Rules have been retained. What has happened is that the proposed Rules represent a streamlined, more flexible and balanced approach, complete with additional qualifications.

As such we propose in Rule 1 to replace “deviate” with “assist...in the maintenance, defence and promotion” and to add the qualifier “as much as possible” seeing that it is not possible to have the same amount of understanding when it comes to all of the affairs of our different sister churches.

Rule 2 creates more flexibility, especially when it comes to sister churches who have a different language than ourselves.

Rule 3 is a revision of present Rule e. For some time already our Committee has noted that the words “to give account to each other” are both a poor translation of the original Dutch, as well as intrusive when it comes to the affairs of our sister churches. Who are we to call them to give account to us? Does that not give the impression that we are lording it over them? Hence we propose that this rule be changed to read as it does.

It should be understood that when either our churches in the past, or our

sister churches have entered into a relationship with a third party, it was never a matter of giving account, but rather a matter of mutual consultation. Rule 4 has been reworded in recognition of the fact that some sister churches issue certificates instead of attestations.

Rule 5 is a re-working of part of present Rule d and tries to make clear that all a synod can do is open the pulpits in principle and that the actual opening is a matter of an invitation by a local church. In addition, it takes into account that not all churches have the same policy when it comes to the pulpit.

Rule 6 is basically a revision of present Rule c. The present Rule c has quite a history behind it. For years our Committee and also various Synods too were convinced that we had never agreed to prior consultation when it came to proposed confessional, liturgical or polity changes but that we would only express a judgment on these changes once they had been made. However, Acts 1968, Art. 79, indicate that we committed ourselves to the principle of prior consultation. This fact is now expressed in this proposed Rule in a streamlined format.

Rule 7 re-states a part of present Rule b and adds the qualifier "to participate as much as local regulations permit." Thereby it recognizes the fact that different sister churches have different regulations when it comes to dealing with delegates from sister churches.

- b. In connection with these proposed changes it might also be beneficial to draw your attention to the Acts 1980, Art. 154, D. 2 which concludes about the Rules for Correspondence that "these rules can be applied realistically according to the circumstances, like the lesser or greater degree of difference between the churches."
- c. Seeing that our proposed Rules are largely derived from the Dutch churches but represent an adaptation of them, we have sent a copy of them to the Dutch deputies on March 4, 1991, and asked for a response. Thus far none has been received. In this connection it would be beneficial if all of our current sister churches would consider them and possibly adopt them. In that way unity of practice would prevail, as also our past Synods have requested.

2. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that General Synod 1992 adopt the proposed Rules and officially call them "Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship."

Furthermore, it recommends that these Rules be presented to the sister churches as the basis for our ongoing relationships, as well as offered to the Presbyterian Church in Korea and the Free Church of Scotland.

Finally, your Committee recommends that the next General Synod be informed of the reactions, if any, from the sister churches.

XIV. THE MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

1. Context

Your Committee has received numerous requests during the past three years from the Presbyterian Church in Korea, the Reformed Church in the United States, the Reformed Church in Zaire, the Reformed Churches in South Africa, National Association of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches (NAPARC), to commence contact with a view to possibly establishing relations with our churches. Your Committee has also received invitations to attend the Assemblies or Synod or Sessions of these churches and organization.

In every case we have had to refuse and state that we were compelled by our present mandate to ask the next Synod for advice and a new mandate to cover our contact with that particular church.

2. Considerations

- a. The Committee could not act upon a growing number of requests over the past years because of the absence of a specific mandate.
- b. The practice of referring these matters to Synod is only proper. The fact that General Synod meets once every three years, however, means that considerable delays are being encountered in pursuing our contacts with other churches.
- c. The ecumenical calling which our churches have, may better be carried out if the Committee receives a mandate to respond to the various requests received, as well as to the invitations extended, if feasible, and report its findings to the next General Synod.
- d. The mandate to respond to requests made to us by other churches is not nearly as far-ranging as that which our Dutch sister churches have given to their Committee, which is to charge the deputies to seek and initiate contact with other churches. Our aim is not to seek or to initiate contacts, but only to be able to respond to overtures.

3. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that General Synod Lincoln 1992 give our Committee the mandate

- a. to investigate diligently all requests received for entering into a sister church relationship;
- b. to respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods or meetings of other churches;
- c. to report on its findings, with suitable recommendations, to the next General Synod.

XV. OTHER REMAINING MATTERS

- a. It has come to our attention that General Synod 1989 decided not to renew the appointment of the brs. E.C. Baartman, A.C. Lengkeek and the Rev.M. van Beveren. We have no quarrel with that, seeing that all synodical appointees serve at the discretion of Synod. We wish to bring to your attention, however, that it appears to be a synodical practice not to inform those brothers of their release, nor to thank them for their efforts on behalf of General Synod in particular and the churches in general.
- b. We have been informed that the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce has put the finishing touches on a brochure introducing the Canadian Reformed Churches. We include some samples of it for your perusal, and request your permission to purchase a certain quantity and send them to our sister churches and to churches requesting more information about our churches.

Respectfully submitted by your Committee,
 February 14, 1992
 June 3, 1992

Elder. H.A. Berends
 Elder. A. Nap
 Rev. Cl. Stam
 Dr. J. Vanderstoep
 Rev. M. Vanderwel
 Dr. J. Visscher (convener-secretary)

APPENDIX I

REPORT OF THE VISITS WITH THE DEPUTIES AND MINISTERS OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND ON SEPTEMBER 14 AND 17, 1990 IN EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW

The Canadian Deputies, Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. Cl. Stam, met with some of the members of the Free Church of Scotland Committee on Assembly Arrangements and Ecumenical Relations, together with the ministers serving in the Glasgow and Edinburgh area.

On Friday, September 14, 1990, we met in Edinburgh at the premises of the Free Church College. Present for the FCS: Prof. A.C. Boyd, Rev. K.W.R. Cameron (past Moderator 1989-90), Rev. A. Gollan (Moderator 1990-91), Rev. D. Macleod, Elder A. MacDonald, Rev. John J. Murray.

On Monday, Sept. 17, 1990, we met in Glasgow at the premises of the St. Vincent Street Free Church. Present for the FCS: Rev. R.C. Christie (new Editor of *The Monthly Record*), Rev. J. Gillies, Rev. J.J. Harding, Rev. D. Macleod, Rev. R.J. McKay.

In both of these meetings the discussions dealt with the following matters:

Background

The Canadian Deputies were given the opportunity to say something about the history and background of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CRC). Mention was made of our roots in the Netherlands and the struggles that our churches had faced during the last centuries. In this regard special attention was paid to the Liberation of 1942-44 and to its repercussions. The immigration experience was also highlighted and certain aspects of our relatively brief history in North America were related.

With respect to the ecumenical relations of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Deputies pointed out that until recently our churches had maintained relations only with churches in Australia, the Netherlands and South Africa. All of these churches share the same history, background, creedal standards and church government. They have a common mother and a common origin in terms of continental Europe.

These relationships, however, should not give the impression that the Canadian Reformed Churches have not been busy elsewhere. Mention was made of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in the United States with whom we have a temporary relationship called "ecclesiastical contact" and with whom discussions are continuing in order to come, if possible, to sister church relations. Mention was also made of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) with whom we have had contact in the past which resulted in some progress but to whom we addressed several appeals when it became clear that they were not willing to sever ties with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN-Synodical) and their liberalizing influences. Finally, we reminded them that our membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) also underlined our true ecumenical commitment.

Relations with the OPC

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

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

They listened sympathetically and requested us to send them copies of the letter which our Contact Committee sent to the OPC. We promised to do so in due time. It may be worthy of note that one of the Scottish brothers asked, "Why do you speak of us as Presbyterian and yourself as Reformed; whereas, we consider ourselves to be Reformed as well." We were a little taken aback by this question and explained that no offense was intended, but that it had become, rightly or wrongly, a way of speaking and easy identification in our circles. It became clear that the FCS considers itself to be Reformed in doctrine and Presbyterian in polity. (Can the same not be said of us?)

Rules for correspondence

From reading the Reports of the Deputies for Relations With Churches Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN-Liberated), as well as from their *Acts of Synod*, we were aware that certain difficulties had arisen around the Rules of Correspondence which the RCN has adopted. Our reading of the Principal *ACTS* of the 1989 General Assembly of the FCS confirmed this. It states there in the Report of the Committee on Assembly Arrangements and Ecumenical Relations, "It was agreed to inform the Dutch Committee that whilst the Free Church of Scotland were happy with the relationship presently subsisting between the two Churches and offered no objection in principle to most of the rules for sister-relations listed they were not convinced of the necessity or appropriateness of detailed regulations. Nor indeed did they appreciate the distinction between sisterly and brotherly relations which appears somewhat artificial. In general therefore the Free Church feel that the exchange of delegates who bring greetings and are given the courtesy of the floor for that purpose, meets the needs of the case." (R p.5)

As a result of the above, the Canadian Deputies noted that there were some misunderstandings that needed to be removed, as in the case of the distinction between brotherly and sisterly relations. Such a distinction does not exist. At the same time we pointed out there is obviously a difference in the way that certain "Reformed" churches and certain "Presbyterian" churches exercise inter-church relations. The former have adopted a more systematic and formal approach with clearly defined rules and procedures. The latter have taken a less comprehensive and more informal approach which includes very little in the way of set regulations.

We, for our part, read our rules and explained in detail and in practical terms how they function. We also asked them to study these rules and to relay to us their reactions. We added that certain parts are in need of streamlining and clarification and that our Committee would be making recommendations to the next General Synod of the CRC in 1992 along those lines. (This in consultation with our sister churches.)

In the ensuing discussion it became clear that the FCS is not opposed in principle to our rules. Their concerns are of a more practical nature in that they are not used to such an approach as ours and wonder how it really functions. At the same time some reservations have also been expressed in FCS circles about their approach to other churches. Their questions about the Dutch rules should also be viewed from the fact that no common language exists between the Netherlands and Scotland. Of course, it is true that English is a language which is taught in the Netherlands and thus accessible to many; however, the same can not be said of the Dutch language. Members of the FCS can not read Dutch books, periodicals or Acts. Should a sister church relationship come into being it would enable some Dutch ministers to preach in Scotland; however, it is doubtful whether any Scottish minister would be able to preach in the Netherlands. Language is thus an obstacle to a fully functioning relationship. Such a problem, however, does not exist between the CRC and the FCS.

As far as the current relationships which the FCS maintains, they have ties which vary. The Free Church congregations in North America are considered a part of the FCS. Close relations are maintained with "daughter churches" and "mission churches" in Australia, India, Ireland, Peru and South Africa, although without prescribed rules. Whenever a General Assembly meets greetings are sent to and received from various

churches. The following are mentioned in the ACTS of 1989 and 1990: the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk of the Netherlands, the Free Church in Southern Africa, the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands (Liberated), the Gereformeerde Kerk in South Africa, Nederduitse Church of Eastern Australia, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Reformed Churches in New Zealand, the Reformed Church of Australia. For our part a lot can be read into the above list of churches; however, it appears that the FCS does not do so. In an informal way they recognize these churches as being faithful and see no problems in exchanging greetings with them. More than that is often not involved.

Free Church congregations in Canada

As part of our task, the Canadian Deputies also discussed with the FCS representatives the matter of the FCS congregations in North America. Up until recently there were the following congregations: Vancouver, B.C. (1), Toronto, ON (1), Prince Edward Island (9), Livonia, MI, U.S.A. (1) and a preaching station in Edmonton, AB. With the exception of the Toronto congregation we were informed that most of these churches were very small and their membership was quite elderly. (Since then the Vancouver congregation has dissolved) At present there are FCS ministers in P.E.I. (3) and in Toronto (1). We pointed out to the FCS that should we enter into a sister church relationship with them in the future that this would have a bearing on the relationship in Canada between our local churches and theirs. It was felt that then some form of mutual recognition and cooperation could be worked out and implemented. It was pointed out to the FCS that some in the CRC were of the opinion that a sister church relations calls for an immediate merger between their churches and ours; however, we informed them that this would be a matter for Synod to decide and that as Deputies we would be more in favour of a process whereby the bonds between our respective local churches would grow and mature. One must be realistic enough to realize that it is not an easy matter to bring together immigrant churches from two different cultures and with two different ecclesiastical traditions. This requires careful planning and sensitive implementation.

Preaching

Another matter that came up in our discussions had to do with preaching and access to the pulpit. As Canadian Deputies we pointed out to the FCS brethren that in our Reformed churches there has always been a tradition which says that access to the pulpit depends on the existence of a sister church relationship. The fact that FCS ministers were not invited the preach in the CRC during the time of the last meeting of the ICRC should not be interpreted as a negative verdict on the FCS. It is simply a matter of our abiding by the rules and procedures that we have always had.

The Rev. John Gillies, who was present and had also represented the FCS at the ICRC, stated that such a policy on the part of the CRC was perfectly understandable and should cause no offense. The fact that criticism was voiced about this in *The Monthly Record* should not be interpreted as being the sentiment of the FCS.

As far as the FCS is concerned, pulpit access does not always take place within the context of a formalized relationship. Naturally ministers of "daughter churches" in other parts of the world are readily accepted. As for ministers from other churches, that seems to be more a matter of personal recommendation and invitation. If the FCS comes into contact with a faithful Reformed church and has confidence in the orthodoxy of its ministers, they may well be invited to preach.

On occasion the FCS sessions will also invite ministers who may be serving in churches such as the liberal Church of Scotland or in a Reformed Baptist congregation. In each of those cases the minister will only be invited if he is known to be Reformed in his views, as well as sensitive to the distinctives of the FCS. (As Deputies we later asked a well-known FCS elder what would happen if a Reformed Baptist minister used an FCS

pulpit to attack infant baptism? His answer was a blunt, "He would never be asked again!")

Needless to say this all sounded strange to our ears; however, we were repeatedly assured that only Reformed preaching is tolerated on their pulpits.

The Lord's Supper

With respect to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the Canadian Deputies were informed about FCS practices. In most local FCS congregations the Lord's Supper is celebrated at least twice a year. This is less frequent than in the CRC; however, it should be understood that when the Supper is celebrated it often involves members from the neighbouring FCS churches. The result is that many members may celebrate it at least six times a year.

The preparations for each local celebration are rather extensive. Preparatory services are often held Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening before the actual celebration which takes place on the Sunday. This is to insure as much as is humanely possible that the members do not eat and drink condemnation to themselves.

As far as admittance to the Lord Supper is concerned, a very strict procedure is followed in the FCS churches. In some places tokens are still being used. (As a matter of fact the custodian of the Free Church College showed us a whole cabinet filled with all sorts of different Lord's Supper tokens.) Every one who is a member of the church in good standing receives from the elders a token which admits him or her to the sacrament. In this way supervision can be carefully exercised.

As for guests at the Lord's table from other churches, that does not seem to happen very often. One must understand that in Scotland there is no large, mobile evangelical community visiting here and there. Most congregations do not see a large influx of visitors, and in terms of the general population the FCS is often mocked, derided and isolated. In short, there is no stipulated policy with respect to visitors, although all are subject to the fencing of the table by means of the series of preparatory services held before the Supper. The primary focus remains on the members of the local church who must show by their confession and walk of life that they can partake in a believing and conscientious manner.

In conclusion

As Canadian Deputies we may say that we were very warmly received by the FCS. At all times the brothers were frank and open in their conversations with us. We came away from the meetings with the impression that here is a Church which is faithful to the Lord and which seeks to serve Him in all things. That certain practices are different from what we are used to can not be doubted, but we are of the opinion that those differences do not hinder us from recognizing the FCS and from recommending to the CRCA as a whole that some of the points dealt with in our report be finalized in writing with the FCS in order that definite proposals can be presented to Synod in due time.

On behalf of the Deputies,
Cl. Stam
J. Visscher

APPENDIX II

REPORT OF THE VISIT WITH THE DUTCH DEPUTIES (BBK) ON SEPTEMBER 20, 1990, AT ZWOLLE, THE NETHERLANDS.

The Canadian Deputies, Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. Cl. Stam, met with the section III (ICRC and Anglo-Saxon countries) of the Dutch Deputies for contact with foreign churches (BBK). The Dutch were represented by Rev. A. de Jager (formerly of Neerlandia), Rev. J. de Gelder, Drs. H. van Veen, and br. D.J. van Wijnen.

The meeting was opened in a proper Christian fashion by the chairman, Rev. J. de Gelder. All members of the meeting were heartily welcomed. An agenda for the meeting was established.

Canadian concerns

The Canadian Deputies received the opportunity to present and explain the concerns raised by the General Synods of Smithville (1980), Cloverdale (1983), Burlington-West (1986) and Winnipeg (1989) concerning *consultation and coordination* with respect to contacts and relationships with "third parties." Emphasis was placed on the need to come to some mutually acceptable "common approach" (see Acts, Burlington-West, Art. 177, D).

The Canadian Deputies expressed disappointment that the Dutch churches had unilaterally proceeded with various relations and that a widening gap was developing between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Gereformeerde Kerken (Liberated) in this respect. The Dutch Deputies showed understanding for the Canadian concerns. They emphasized that it is their striving to have prior consultation as much as possible, especially when it comes to contacts with English-speaking churches in the United Kingdom and in the United States. They always try to keep the Canadian churches duly informed and will continue to do so.

Independent federations

At the same time, however, the Dutch Deputies stressed that it is not always possible and feasible to come to a simultaneous coordination of these contacts and relations with others. The churches have their own responsibility in these matters as independent federations.

This was illustrated by two examples. The Dutch Deputies had informed the Canadian Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad well in advance of their intent to proceed with recognizing the Free Church of Scotland, but did not see it as necessary to wait for the Canadian Churches to take the same steps. The Free Church of Scotland was seen by the Dutch sister churches more as "an European affair." The Dutch Deputies admitted that it had somewhat been overlooked that there are also congregations of the Free Church of Scotland *in Canada*.

The Dutch sister churches at their Synod of Leeuwarden also felt compelled to enter into a sister church relationship with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) because of the great need to support this church in its mission work in Zaire, Africa. Time is of the essence for immediate help and support when it is urgently required. Therefore "coordination" of the contacts in this regard and the resulting sister church relationship was not possible. The developments with respect to the RCUS did indeed go quicker than initially expected.

The Dutch Deputies expressed their willingness to strive for coordination of contacts, but also urged the Canadian Reformed Churches to show diligence and resoluteness in these contacts. In the changing ecumenical climate, it was said, we cannot fall behind.

The Canadian Deputies feel that they have to the best of their ability presented the concerns as summarized by the Synod of Winnipeg (1989, *Acts*, page 74). We are grateful to report that the Dutch Deputies are well aware of our concerns and will strive all the more for coordination and consultation as much as possible. This will be facilitated if the churches adopt a common set of rules for "correspondence," as suggested by the recent Synod of Leeuwarden.

Rules for correspondence

Regarding the rules for correspondence, it was noted that the Synod of Leeuwarden, had decided to maintain only *one* ecclesiastical relationship with churches abroad (sister church relationship). This means that the “temporary contact relationship” is no longer in function. This is also in accordance with the desire of the Canadian Reformed Churches (*Acts, Cloverdale, Art. 110, C and D*).

The new Dutch rules were read and discussed. These rules are as follows:

RULES FOR ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING SISTER CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD.

(translation Cl. Stam)

1. Content of the sister church relationship

According to the Reformed confession, a sister church relationship with foreign churches exists in the mutual recognition of each other as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ with a corresponding exercising of ecclesiastical fellowship.

2. The establishing of sister church relationships

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands will enter into a sister church relationship with foreign churches only after it has been ascertained, particularly by means of Deputies, that such churches have not only officially recognized the Reformed confession of the Word of God but also actually maintain it in their ecclesiastical practice of doctrine, worship, church order and liturgy.

The following must be taken into account:

- 2.1. The Lord Jesus Christ gathers His Church from out of various nations, each of which are determined by their geographical location, history, and culture, so that foreign churches may not be judged with respect to differences in non-essential points in the manner of confession, liturgy, church order, and practice.
- 2.2. In case of relations with “third parties,” it must be carefully investigated what these relations involve for the church in question, in order to determine the value, the sense, and the best possible procedure of entering into a sister church relationship and/or the exercising of an ecclesiastical relationship with such a church.
- 2.3. It is possible that in certain countries more than one ecclesiastical federation may exist which ought to be recognized as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the possibility of relations with more than one ecclesiastical federation in the same country cannot in itself be ruled out.

Because of Christ's command for unity, however, there may be no resignation towards such a situation of “dual relations,” and it ought to remain a topic of discussion.

3. Rules for the exercising of the sister church relationship.

The sister church relationship entered into with a church abroad shall be exercised according to the following rules, with the goal that as Reformed churches we together remain faithful to the confession of God's Word, that we assist one another, and that we encourage and exhort one another to bear witnesses in this world in word and deed of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To ensure this, the following rules shall apply as minimum:

- 3.1. The churches shall see to each other that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy.
- 3.2. 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).

- 3.3. The churches shall inform each other concerning the entering into relations with third parties.
- 3.4. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation.
- 3.5. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches.

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

- 3.6. In case of changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms, which are of a material confessional nature, the sister churches shall be especially informed of this intent, so that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.
- 3.7. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisors, as much as this is possible.

Ground:

The nature of the sister church relationship requires that rules for inter-church relations be established and maintained.

The Canadian Deputies pass on the following information as well. Synod Leeuwarden instructed its Deputies "to send to the sister churches with whom a sister church relation already exists the newly formulated "Rules For Sister Church Relations" – where necessary in English translation – with the request that the sister churches agree to continue the sister church relationship on the basis of the newly formulated rules."

Some discussion followed on the proper English wording of the new Dutch rules. The Canadian Deputies offered their assistance. The Canadian Deputies will present these new rules for discussion to the Canadian Contact Committee and the forthcoming Synod Lincoln 1992.

Regarding the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

The Dutch Deputies inquired about the document "Biblical Principles concerning the Unity of the Church" as published by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. They asked: what is the position of the Canadian Reformed Churches with respect to this document?

The Canadian Deputies responded that this document has been well-received in the Canadian churches and has been included as an Appendix to the Acts of Synod Winnipeg 1989. It will function further in the discussions with the OPC. The Deputies referred the Dutch Deputies on this point to the Committee for Contact with the OPC to give a more accurate update on the current situation.

The Orthodox Christian Reformed Church (OCRC)

The Dutch Deputies requested some information on the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church. The Canadian Deputies gave some information, mentioning that there are some local contacts with OCRC congregations, but none with the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad.

The Canadian Deputies suggested that the situation with the OCRC is still too uncertain to take concerted action. The Dutch Deputies expressed their interest in the developments and asked to be kept up to date in this matter.

Different mandate

At this point in the discussion it was noted that the Dutch Deputies have a different synodical mandate than the Canadian Deputies. The Dutch Deputies have been appointed to *seek and initiate* contact with other churches, while the Canadian Deputies must wait

with the making of any contacts until a *specific mandate* has been received from General Synod. This explains why the Dutch Deputies can proceed more independently and swiftly than their Canadian counterparts.

The advantages and drawbacks of these different mandates were briefly discussed. The Canadian Deputies expressed as their concern that the Dutch approach does not sufficiently recognize the fact that the *churches* and not *committees* are to determine the agenda of the major assemblies. Such an approach can easily lead to excess. The Dutch Deputies agreed that careful discretion is required in this matter.

Requests for financial support

The Dutch Deputies mentioned that the Dutch churches had received various requests support from individual Canadian churches for support to build churches or purchase parsonages. They wondered if such requests should not be accompanied by a classical recommendation and a letter from the (Canadian) Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad stating that the request is bona fide.

The Canadian Deputies agreed with this and promise to present this matter in their report to the next General Synod.

International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

The Deputies briefly discussed a few matters concerning the ICRC. It was noted that the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk would most likely ask to be admitted to the ICRC. The question has been asked by the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk if the ICRC has a future of "cooperation" or "confrontation" between "Reformed" and "Presbyterian" churches.

The Canadian Deputies responded that the admission of churches to the ICRC is not so much a matter of the member churches individually but of the Conference itself. Each member church must determine later whether the admission of new churches was done properly on good grounds. The Dutch Deputies agreed with this approach.

Conclusion

The meeting was conducted in an open and brotherly manner. It appears that the Dutch and Canadian churches are aware of each other's concerns and that there is a great desire to work together in the matter of international ecclesiastical relations.

At the same time it became clear that each federation lives in a different situation and must respond to the needs and opportunities, as presented, in a responsible manner as best seems feasible and necessary. The Deputies pledge to continue close consultation in the hope that the coordination of contacts will become more and more a reality.

Rev. Cl. Stam led in closing the meeting with thanksgiving to the Lord.

On behalf of the Deputies,
Cl. Stam
J. Visscher

APPENDIX III

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA

I. HISTORY

The Presbyterian Church in Korea ("Kosin") is a branch of the true church of Jesus Christ, founded on God's Holy Word, and holds to the Reformed Faith. Since the coming of Protestant missionaries to Korea in 1884, the Korean church has had an astonishing development unparalleled in mission annals. The Presbyterian Theological Seminary was founded in 1901 in Pyongyang, and by 1912 a General Assembly was organized.

For about half a century from the first entry of the Gospel, the Korean church grew steadily. But under Japan's imperialistic domination the church underwent many difficulties. In this period two kinds of problems afflicted the Korean church first, the infiltration of theological liberalism, and second, the Japanese Shinto shrine issue.

Finally, on September 10, 1938, the yet undivided Korean Presbyterian Church, at its 27th General Assembly meeting at the Pyongyang Outside Westgate Church, broke down under this repression, and approved shrine observance. Both before and after this shameful decision, ministers, elders, deacons, and ordinary believers who merely wished to live according to the Bible and so refused shrine worship, were arrested in large numbers, and eventually some fifty became martyrs to their faith under this terrible persecution.

In 1938, Pyongyang Seminary closed its doors because of its opposition to Shinto shrine observance. In 1940, in accommodation to the policy of the Japanese government, Chosun Seminary (now Hansin College) opened in Seoul, and in 1946 this school was recognized as the official seminary of the General Assembly.

On August 15, 1945, Japan was defeated, Korea was liberated, and on August 17, those who had been imprisoned for their opposition to Shinto shrine observance were released. Two among them, Rev. Joo Nam-sun and Rev. Han Sang-dong, founded Korea Theological Seminary a year later in Pusan on September 20, 1946, to train church leaders in order to reform the erring Korean church. By this action began anew the training of church leaders in the historic Presbyterian tradition.

However, the still undivided church's General Assembly would not recognize Korea Theological Seminary, and the delegates from the Kyungnam Buptong (legal) Presbytery supporting Korea Theological Seminary, not being recognized, spent three years trying in vain to normalize their relationship with the General Assembly. But they were refused membership. Accordingly, on September 11, 1952, organizing its own General Assembly, the "Korea Pa (group)" or "Kosin" church was instituted. It is true that in December, 1960, the church united with the "Seungdong" group (later called "Hapdong"), but this did not work out, and in September, 1963, the church returned to its original form and continues until this day as the Presbyterian Church in Korea ("Kosin").

II. THE CHURCH'S ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS

At the 26th (1976) General Assembly the church's principles were recorded as follows: "we believe in, preach, and live by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament and the original Presbyterian standards (The Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Government, the Manual of Discipline and the Directory of Worship) following Reformed theology."

Our church's doctrinal standards are the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism. With the addition of the 1903 American Presbyterian chapters on "The Holy Spirit" and "The Mission of the Church" to the 17th century Westminster Confession of Faith, our confession numbers 35 chapters. Also, as administrative standards we have the Form of Government, the

Manual of Discipline, and the Directory of Worship. These standards have been published (in Korean) in a book entitled "The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Korea."

III. CONSTITUENCY

Our church is now founded in every area of the country, with 21 presbyteries, 1,200 churches, and a total of 300,000 adherents. There are 1,000 ministers and 2,200 elders in the churches.

IV. INSTITUTIONS

1. Kosin University

Kosin University was started in 1954 with a 4 year preseminary course in Korea Theological Seminary and in 1970 was authorized by the Ministry of Education to become Korea Theological College. In 1981, with the opening of the medical college, the name of the college was changed from Korea Theological College to Kosin University. In 1985 the campus was moved from Songdo to Youngdo. Presently the University consists of the following departments: Theology, Christian Education, Religious Music. Children's Education, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Nutrition, Home Economics, Health Education & Medicine. Now there are 150 Professors (including 100 at the medical school) and 2,100 students.

2. Kosin University Graduate School

With the purpose of giving continuity and deeper content to its education program, Kosin University Graduate School in February 15, 1978, received authorization from the Ministry of Education to establish the Graduate school and started with an enrollment of 20 students in its Master of Theology Program (Th. M.) and 16 students in its Master Program of Literature. Nov. 29, 1986 the Graduate School of Medicine was opened and the total number of Master Program students was 56. In Oct. 29, 1988 the doctorate course was opened and we received permission to enrol 27 students in the Doctorate of Medicine Program. Presently there are 56 students enrolled in the Master degree course and 27 students in the Doctorate course of medical sciences. We are also preparing for the opening of the master and doctorate programs in natural sciences. We have also applied to open a Ph. D. course in theology and Christian Education.

3. Korea Theological Seminary

Our Seminary which was founded in September 20, 1946, as a directly operated training institute of the Kosin Presbyterian for the formation of church workers. From its inception it was authorized by the Ministry of Education. After that, according to the government education policy, in March 1, 1981, the Korea Theological College became Kosin University and the establishment of the Seminary was authorized by the Government and the 3-year M. Div. program for graduate students was started. In the main Seminary campus there are 10 professors and 200 students while at the Seoul branch there are 100 non-regular students.

4. Kosin Medical Center

After its establishment in 1951 as the Gospel Hospital with the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel, developed itself into the Kosin Medical Center that comprises the medical school, the nursing school, Kimhae Gospel Hospital, the Cancer Research Center and many other kinds of medical research centers. Now the 900-bed Kosin Medical Center employs over 1000 employees and uses the most modern equipment such as MRI etc., becoming the most important medical treatment center in Pusan and the Kyung Nam area. Especially through the medi-

cal researches done at its various centers and laboratories it has become a leader in many medical fields. Afterward it will do its best to also train future medical missionaries and to work ever more at spreading the Gospel of Jesus-Christ.

V. HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS

1. Home Missions

Our church began centered in Pusan, but now has many churches throughout the country. In 1976, the denomination's Development Study Committee's "Twenty-five Year Evangelistic Plan" was set in motion, and, under the General Assembly's urging, churches are exerting much effort in evangelism and church planting.

2. Chaplain Activities

With a military mission being called "the Golden Fisheries for Evangelism," 36 chaplains are active on several military bases. If a student of Kosin College passes the Ministry of Defense's chaplain candidate test and has finished both the four year college course and the three year course of theological seminary, he qualifies for entry. As of May 10, 1990, there are 43 candidates among our students.

3. Organizations Under the Care of the General Assembly

Churches, Presbyteries, and the General Assembly have each created organizations for the purpose of evangelism, education, and fellowship. Specifically, the Sunday School Association, the Students for Christ Movement (SFC), Christian Endeavor (CE), the Women's Missionary Society, the Men's Missionary Society, etc., are all active in the propagation of the Gospel.

4. Foreign Missions

The foreign missions of the KPC began in 1957 by sending Rev. Kim Young-Jin to Taiwan as a missionary. However, the churches have not been actively engaged in foreign missions until Rev. Yoo Hwan-Joon joined Rev. Kim in Taiwan in 1974. In 1979 the Mission Board wrote the mission's principles and regulations by which the churches can carry the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, and established the Mission Research Center. During the 1980s the KPC have emphasized the foreign missions and expanded the mission fields by sending 25 missionaries to Japan, Indonesia, Phillipines, Nepal, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Brazil. The Mission Board also set up the Missionary Training Institute (MTI) to train missionary candidates.

We have many "M1" missionaries ministering among Korean emigrants in the countries such as Japan, United States, Canada, Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain and Australia.

VI. CHURCH EDUCATION

Our church has declared its educational purpose as follows:

"In cooperation with one another, we seek to teach the Bible in order to educate Christians in the tradition of the faith and train them in holy living, with three aspects of personal life in view:

1. The Person in worship – knowing, loving and serving the Triune God.
2. The Person in cooperation with others – understanding man as God's image-bearer, loving, helping others and preaching Christ to all men.
3. The Person in culture – being aware of the meaning of one's existence and special calling, being faithful to one's responsibilities."

From 1965 on, the denomination, active in church education, has prepared teaching materials, mainly for the use of Sunday schools.

VII. LITERATURE ACTIVITIES

From the beginning, our church has laid special emphasis on literature ministries. Beginning in 1955, *The Christian Reporter* (weekly, was for a while our denominational paper. Also, publications centering around Korea Theological Seminary appeared – *The Watchman*, *The Reformed View*, *Church Life*, and *The Reformed Faith*. Now, however, *The Herald of Christianity* and *Kosin Monthly* serves as the denominational magazine. Also, under the general denominational umbrella, Students for Christ, Christian Endeavor, the Sunday School Association, and other groups are zealously spreading the truth via various publications.

VIII. COOPERATION WITH OTHER CHURCH BODIES

Our church earnestly seeks to maintain close relationships with other churches and organizations taking a Reformed stance, for the sake of more fruitful ministries worldwide. We maintain a sister-relationship with The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), The Free Reformed Churches in Australia, and The Reformed Churches in South Africa. We maintain a fraternal relationship with the following churches and organizations: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (in America), The Overseas Missionary Fellowship, The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, The Reformed Church in Japan, and The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). We are a member of International Conference of the Reformed Churches (ICRC).

APPENDIX IV

LETTER FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA RE: RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CANRC (OCT. 10, 1990)



고신대학
KOSIN COLLEGE

T. 412- 8062~4

149-1 Dongnam-Dong, Youngdo-Ku.
Pusan, Rak. (606-080)

President: Ho Jin Jun

Fraternal Relations Committee

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA
P.O. Box 190
Pusan, 606-701, Republic of Korea

10th October, 1990

Dr. James Visscher
Convenor/Secretary,
The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad
5734-191A Street
Surrey, B.C. V3S 4N9
CANADA.

Dear Brother,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you very much for your letter of 13th July and for your greetings to our General Assembly which was held in Taegu at Song San Church from 17th to 21st September. Among the important decisions made the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the Fraternal Relations Committee to establish brother & sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. I note from your letter that your Synod is not scheduled to meet again until 1992 so we will look forward to the official response at that time. We would appreciate it if you could advise us of any action that we need to take, and we would like to suggest that you formulate an agreement in English that can be signed at the appropriate time.

As regards the next meeting of the ICRC to be held in Korea is concerned I note that you will be writing with information after the meeting of the Interim Committee in September, so will look forward to your letter in due course.

Sincerely in Christ,

Ho Jin Jun, Chairman
Fraternal Relations Committee

APPENDIX V

LETTER FROM THE CHURCH AT CARMAN TO THE CRCA RE: RCUS (SEPT. 7, 1990)

Canadian Reformed Church

POST OFFICE BOX 164
CARMAN, MANITOBA, CANADA
R0G 0J0

September 7, 1990

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

Esteemed Brethren:

Thank you for your letter dated June 18, 1990. We sincerely appreciate that you informed us of the recommendation given by the committee on relations with churches abroad of our sister churches in the Netherlands to their Synod Leeuwarden. We understand that in the mean time this synod has adopted these proposals. We whole heartily agree with your reservations about this course of action and are thankful that this matter was addressed at Synod Leeuwarden through our deputies.

However, we cannot agree with your conclusion "to approach the next General Synod on this matter of the RCUS and request a mandate to take up official contact" for the following reasons.

1. Although the committee has received a mandate concerning churches which participate in the ICRC, it has received no mandate concerning other churches and therefore the church orderly way would be that such a request comes from the churches and not from a committee appointed by a synod.
2. Because the RCUS is a federation within America where there are churches with which we are in federation, we cannot speak about the RCUS as a "church abroad". Rather than speaking about a sister church relationship we should be speaking about exercising full ecclesiastical unity. By analogy, the OPC has never been dealt with by the committee for correspondence abroad (now known as the committee on relations with churches abroad) for the same reason.
3. General Synod 1986 decided, Article 85 p. 32 that "The procedure for admitting other churches to the confederation has always been a matter of local churches with the judgment of Classis and the concurring advice of Deputies of Regional Synod." This is the procedure which we must follow.
4. As you must have learned from our reports, our discussions with the RCUS have been slow, but frank. Although communication with them, will, the Lord willing, be fruitful, and therefore we will continue local contact, there are serious doctrinal and church political difficulties which prevent us from making recommendations for ecclesiastical unity with the RCUS to major assemblies at this time.

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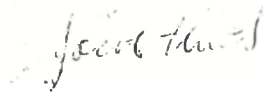
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May the Lord continue to bless you in the task you have been given and may He grant that all His children practice the unity of the true faith.

fraternal greetings
for the consistory



Rev. P.K.A. de Boer



Elder J. Kuik (corresponding clerk)

APPENDIX VI

LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT CARMAN FROM THE CRCA RE: RCUS (MARCH 1, 1991)

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

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

March 1, 1991

The Canadian Reformed Church
Box 164,
Carman, MB
R0G 0J0

Esteemed Brothers,

Our Committee dealt with your letter of Sept. 7, 1990, at its meetings of Nov. 1, 1990 and Feb. 28, 1991. In response we would like to make the following comments about the points which you raise:

Regarding your point one, we would remind you that the mandate of our Committee is not limited by the ICRC or churches who participate in it. Before the creation of the ICRC our churches already maintained relations with sister churches abroad, and even after the emergence of the ICRC our churches continued to maintain a sister relationship with the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in South Africa which did not join the ICRC until 1989.

While agreeing with you that requests to enter into relations with other churches normally come from the churches, it is a fact that General Synod 1986 adopted the recommendation of our Committee to enter into discussions with the Free Church of Scotland.

Regarding point two our Committee would point out to you that we are a Committee appointed by the Synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The fact that we have a number of congregations in the United States does not change the fact that we are officially a Canadian federation. In that sense it is not out of order to regard the RCUS as a foreign church or as a church abroad.

Furthermore, if we assume, for the sake of argument, that your position of our being Canadian and American Reformed Churches is a correct one, we would still question the implication that this calls solely for "full ecclesiastical unity" with the RCUS. The impression which we receive from your letter is that it is either unity or no recognition at all. For our part we are of the opinion that a better course of action would be to recognize each other as sister churches (based on the necessary grounds) and within that framework come to know each other and so to have our churches (or those local churches of ours in the US) work toward full ecclesiastical unity with the RCUS.

As for the OPC not being a matter dealt with by our Committee because it is not a "church abroad", we are not aware that this same reasoning was applied when the original decision for contact with the OPC was taken. If we are mistaken, we stand to be corrected.

Proceeding on to **point three**, in light of the fact that we do not consider the RCUS to be a "local church", we are not convinced that this Article 85 of Synod 1986 applies.

Finally, it is on to **point four**, and here we observe that your discussions to date have been with several local congregations and ministers in the RCUS. While we commend you in this regard for your activity and dedication, we are of the opinion that it is not sufficient to keep discussions of such a nature as this confined to a few local churches. If the contacts are to be fruitful and to give a fair evaluation of the RCUS as a whole, then they will need to be on a broader basis.

As a result of the above, our Committee remains convinced that this is a matter for General Synod. We will therefore propose to General Synod 1992 that either our Committee or another Committee appointed by Synod take up official contact with the RCUS with a view to possibly establishing sister church relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

As ever, brothers, we are appreciative of your efforts for the unity of the body of Christ. May the Lord bless your efforts.

With brotherly greetings,

For the Committee,

J. Visscher, convener/secretary

APPENDIX VII

ARTICLE OF THE REV. P.K.A. DEBOER ON THE RCUS (*CLARION*, JAN. 4, 1991)

CONTACT WITH THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES (RCUS)

By P.K.A. de Boer

Recent issues of *Clarion* reported that the Synod Leeuwarden of the Gereformeerde Kerken (*vrijgemaakt*) entered into a sister church relationship with the RCUS. In his comment about this decision (*Clarion*, vol. 39, no. 18, p. 381) the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene writes that "If there is a church in our midst that is convinced that contact should be taken up with a specific federation or church in another country, this church has itself to do the investigation and come to the sister churches with well-documented proposals." Because the question of contact with the RCUS rightly arises in our midst now that our Dutch sister churches have made this decision, it might be good for all the sister churches to know that the Canadian Reformed Church at Carman has been doing exactly this. At the present, the consistory of the church at Carman is not ready to present proposals to the major assemblies for contacts with the RCUS, but local contact, with the sincere desire to come to such a point, will continue. In the meantime it may be wise to inform the sister churches about the work that has been done. A number of reports on the visits with them have been presented to the consistory and handed out locally to the members of the congregation. This article is written with the permission and encouragement of the consistory. However, the undersigned author assumes full responsibility for what is said and the evaluations which are made.

History of the RCUS

The roots of the RCUS are found in the reformation from the Roman Catholic Church which took place in Germany. Many, fleeing persecution and state-controlled churches, escaped to America. Concerning the RCUS as it is today, it is of special interest to note the wave of immigration of German people from Southern Russia during the years 1870 through 1902. They settled mostly in the Dakotas.

In America, and in particular in New Amsterdam, (present-day New York) contact was established with Dutch immigrants and through them with the churches in the Netherlands. They instituted their own churches, the German Reformed Church, but had close ties with the Reformed (Hervormde) Church of the Netherlands. Until 1793 these German Reformed Churches received ministers from classis Amsterdam of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. Some difficulties arose between the Dutch and German churches concerning ordination of ministers and the state control of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. In order to ordain their own ministers and because of language differences, the two churches went their own ways.

An event which took place in Europe in 1817 had quite an impact on the German Reformed Churches in America. In that year the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of Prussia merged, forming the Evangelical Church of Germany. It put a lot of pressure on the German Reformed Churches in America to seek a similar kind of ecclesiastical unity. As a result a new constitution was adopted in 1819 and the Heidelberg Catechism was received as the exclusive confessional standard. It was also around this time that the name was changed from German Reformed Church to the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS).

The teaching at the seminary was influenced much by what was happening in Europe. This seminary was first located on the campus of Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA, from there it was moved to York, PA and finally to Mercersburg, PA. The seminary was influenced by the Barthian approach to speak about God's Word in distinction from the

Bible. The result was that the Bible was no longer considered to be God's Word and the reformational *sola scriptura* was no longer maintained. The teaching from this seminary became known as the Mercersburg theology.

Many, especially in the Dakotas, objected to the direction the men at the seminary had taken. It was especially in this area that objections were made to the Mercersburg theology because a new periodical, *Der Waechter (The Watchman)* edited by Rev. J. Stark and later by Rev. H. Triek, was well received here. This paper promoted the theology of Dr. H.F. Kohlbruegge. Dr. Kohlbruegge emphasized that salvation is a free gift, but he was weak when it came to covenantal obedience. Although he had contact with the churches in the Netherlands and even preached in the church where Dr. A. Kuyper was minister, it never came to an official recognition because of this weakness. However, till this day, especially among the older members, Dr. Kohlbruegge remains the champion who defended the truth against Barthian liberalism.

The whole matter came to a head when plans of union with various churches were made. It is not necessary to go into details as to which churches were all involved because some of them backed out. However, a union was agreed upon between the evangelical Synod and the RCUS. The result was that on June 26, 1934 the Evangelical and Reformed Church came into being.

All the classes of the RCUS had voted in favour of this union except the Eureka classis. Eureka is a town in South Dakota near the North Dakota state border. This classical region continued as the RCUS along with a few churches from other classical areas which joined them. Until 1986 they called themselves the RCUS Eureka Classis, but in that year they divided themselves into four classical regions and established a synod.

Presently (1988 statistics) the RCUS consists of thirty-two churches, 2,876 communicant members and 3,720 members in total. This works out to an average of a little less than 117 members per congregation. The largest congregation is at Manitowoc, PA, with 409 members and the smallest congregation is at Colorado Springs, CO, with 12 members. Most congregations are small, under 100 members and when visiting them one is struck by the fact that most members are quite old. There are very few youth among them.

Confessional standards

As already mentioned, the RCUS maintains the Heidelberg Catechism as their only confessional standard. Before the new constitution of 1819 was adopted they had also used the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort as confessional standards. Although some investigation was done, nobody seems to know exactly why these confessional standards were dropped. Efforts have been made to re-adopt them. A vote held at classis May 2-8, 1984, although a majority was in favour, was insufficient. There seem to be two reasons for not re-adopting these confessions, namely, many do not see a need for more confessions besides the Heidelberg Catechism and secondly, many churches have an unchangeable article in their local constitutions to the effect that they only accept the Heidelberg Catechism as their confessional standard. The adoption of other confessions would constitutionally mean their demise.

In order to maintain their confessional standards the RCUS have their licentiates, (candidates) ministers of the Word, and teachers of theology sign a subscription form. In this subscription form they testify that they "honestly and truly accept the doctrine of the Heidelberg Catechism as in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures." Note that this wording is a little weak. It could mean, the system of doctrine as found in the Heidelberg Catechism, and thus leave room for criticism of what the catechism actually says. This weakness seems to be covered by another article of their constitution which states that "The Heidelberg Catechism is received as an authoritative expression of the truths in the Holy Scriptures, and is acknowledged to be the standard of doctrine in the Reformed Church in the United States."

Before entering the ministry or granting permission to proclaim God's Word, the candidates undergo a classical examination similar to what we are used to in our churches.

Unlike us, the students who intend to study for the ministry are examined by classis concerning their intentions and upon successful examination receive ecclesiastical and financial support. The constitution specifies that "A student for the ministry shall not be eligible to the pastoral office."

Moreover the RCUS constitution states (Articles 3,4,5,6) that the Word of God as confessed in the Heidelberg Catechism is to be taught in the worship services and to the youth of the church with the view to confirmation of their faith. Catechism classes are held for the youth.

The other office-bearers, elders and deacons, do not sign a subscription form.

Along with the Heidelberg Catechism, the Apostles' Creed is received as a confessional standard. No mention is made in the constitution or elsewhere of any other creed. Upon questioning, verbal assurance was given that the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds are also maintained.

The members of the congregations who make public confirmation or confession of their faith commit themselves to the Word of God as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism. They make this distinction, "confirmation," referring to those who were baptized members, and "confession" for those who come from elsewhere. They do not seem to attach any further importance to this distinction.

The intention is certainly there to maintain the Word of God as confessed in the Heidelberg Catechism and there is some ecclesiastical policy in place to preserve it. However, as will be shown, there are a number of areas which need further attention and more discussion.

Theonomy

A little earlier it was said that Dr. H.F. Kohlbruegge has had a lot of influence through the periodical *Der Waechter* and that he emphasized salvation as a free gift but was weak when it came to covenantal obedience. The RCUS has suffered on account of this weakness. They themselves admit that in the past they have taken too much an attitude of either we are elected or not. Those elected are saved. Those who are not elected are condemned and therefore the way of life is not all that important. While expressing sincere concern about this kind of laxity, some ministers defended theonomy. Theonomy is the teaching that the law of God, as revealed in all of Scripture, continues to apply. It is combined with post-millennialism to speak about the establishment of God's kingdom on this earth. Thus, David Chilton, an extreme theonomist, teaches that the world is directed more and more toward submission to all of God's law until man, in its civil government, again has his rightful dominion over this creation. He himself refers to it as dominion theology. The ministers in the RCUS do not go to this extreme and are generally more careful. The most avid defender of theonomy among them suggests that the Belgic Confession before the seventeen words were removed from Article 36, was theonomic. These words state, as part of the duty of the civil government to maintain order that "all idolatry and false worship may be removed and prevented, the kingdom of the antichrist may be destroyed." Those who defend this teaching tend to stress the activity of the civil government for the establishing of God's kingdom and one is left with an impression of anabaptist leanings.

The RCUS has officially rejected theonomy. From the documentation it is very clear that they really struggled to come to a clear definition of theonomy. At their synod of March 30 - April 2, 1987 it was agreed that "2. It is the position of the RCUS that the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that the ceremonial and judicial laws instituted by Moses have been entirely abolished and done away with by the coming of Christ, as far as it relates to obligation and obedience on our part. The moral law, however, has not been abolished and it respects obedience, but only as it respects the curse and constraint." The synod decision did not go as far as the study committee proposed it, namely that "No one shall in the future be licensed in the (RCUS) ...who espouse theonomic views as outlined in the Report on Theonomy...."

The result is that even though theonomy is "officially" rejected, there are those who still hold this position within the RCUS. Moreover, there seems to be a real lack of a good

balance between confessing election to salvation and living in covenantal unity with the Lord. This is an area which certainly needs more attention.

Using pictures of the Lord Jesus

This a point which is really stressed by the RCUS and may be an obstacle for them should we seek closer contact. One of their translations of Lord's Day 35 Q.A. 98 is interesting. It reads: "But may not pictures be tolerated in churches as books for the people?" They argue that the use of pictures of the Lord Jesus in kindergarten and Sunday school is much like using books for the laity during the Middle Ages among the illiterate. Such a picture of the Lord Jesus, they insist, is only half a truth because the Lord Jesus was not just man but also God. Some more discussion on this matter should prove fruitful and perhaps we should re-examine our use of such pictures.

The doctrine of the church

It may seem that we stumble into this question time and again, but it certainly is important to remain faithful to the Lord in this respect. Perhaps this question keeps coming up because ever since the World Council of Churches was established there seems to have been pressure for ecumenical unity above ecclesiastical faithfulness. The RCUS suffers from a denominationalist or pluriformist thinking. It comes out in the RCUS constitution which speaks in article 4 about "other branches of the Christian church" and in article 5 where members who move away are urged to "unite with another congregation of the Reformed Church, or another Orthodox Protestant Church...."

This pluriform way of speaking about the church has many practical consequences. Thus a person who leaves the RCUS for another church (denomination) is admonished and warned, but given a certification of dismissal (attestation). During discussion it became clear that such transfer of membership is granted to members going, for example, to a Baptist church. Those who leave are admonished and warned, but in the sense of leaving a more faithful church for a less faithful one. The RCUS constitution makes provision for ministers to make such moves as well. Recently, the minister with whom we have had most of our contact and who was the chairman of their committee relation churches abroad as well as having been elected president of the RCUS synod, left for another church (i.e. another denomination). The details of the circumstances and reasons for this move do not have to be made public, but the point is that this pluriformist thinking about the church certainly has its practical consequences, such as moving from church to church, and, as will be shown in separate sections, also has a bearing on how the sacraments are used and discipline is exercised.

Some of their own ministers suggest that this easy transfer to other churches (denominations) is perhaps the main reason why the RCUS has remained so small and has few young members. Many have moved to "bigger" churches or to places where there is no RCUS and have given priority to better employment opportunities while being content with a somewhat less faithful church.

When visiting with office-bearers and members of the RCUS there are many who really show a desire to love the Lord according to His Word, but our concern is whether this is really maintained in their teaching and practice. The pluriform way of teaching about the church leads one to go to the church of one's own choice rather than where the Lord calls His people together. This makes the church into a human religious organization instead of confessing it to be the Lord who gathers His people by calling them to the assembly where His Name is proclaimed. This is certainly an area which needs much more discussion and attention.

Worship services

Worship services are held every Sunday in the RCUS. As a rule there is only one worship service per Sunday. These worship services are generally held in the morning. The preaching of God's Word is kept central in the worship services. The RCUS constitution states in

article 178 that the “essential parts of public worship are an invocation, singing, prayer, reading of the Word, preaching a sermon, giving offerings, and the benediction.” No preaching of God’s Word as summarized in the catechism, the way we are used to it, is done. Some of their ministers think it may be a good idea to introduce a second worship service where God’s Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism can be proclaimed. Generally there is too much resistance to this idea among the membership. This resistance seems to reflect a Kohlbrueggeian emphasis on election without covenantal obedience. The emphasis is that one is saved by God’s providence and therefore hearing and knowing God’s Word is considered to be less important.

The use of the sacraments

Baptism is administered to infants of believing parents and unbaptized adults upon confession of faith. From their side they were happy to hear that we believe baptism to be a sign and seal of God’s covenant promise and not of election.

The RCUS constitution, article 2, speaks about “full communion with the Church by confirmation, profession of faith...” which leads to the question whether baptized children are considered to be full members of the church. In conversation we received assurance that children are considered full members of the church, but are told that they do not receive all the blessings, such as participation at the Lord’s Supper.

Concerning the celebration of the Lord’s supper, baptized members who have confirmed or confessed their faith may attend. For confirmation or confession the candidate is examined concerning his faith in the presence of the whole congregation.

Concerning guests who are invited to attend the Lord’s Supper, they emphasize their position to be *restricted* opposed to *closed*. By *restricted* they mean that the local consistory supervises who may attend the Lord’s Supper. The RCUS constitution (article 189) says that “Members, in good standing, of other denominations holding the essential doctrines of the Gospel, should be invited to participate in the observance of this sacrament.” In discussion they admitted that “essential doctrines” is a vague expression. In practice, we are told, this means a member of the Baptist Church who is known by a member of the congregation and accepts Christ as Saviour and shows it by his life, is invited to attend without being questioned about his church affiliation. In discussion it was acknowledged that this way of inviting members from other denominations has everything to do with considering these denominations to be other branches of the church.

Church discipline

Church discipline receives attention in the RCUS constitution. Generally speaking the approach is more like a court of law speaking about trials, prosecutors, witness and judgments. The constitution only speaks about Matthew 18 in connection with “alleged personal injuries.” In conversation it became apparent that disciplinary action is taken very rarely.

Concerning ministers of the Word, the constitution in article 30 makes it possible for ministers to resign. When there are difficulties in the congregation this is a course of action that is usually followed. Such resignation must have classical approval. This article does not say anything about reconciliation by way of repentance on either the part of the minister or the congregation. It speaks about the “desire” of the pastor and the joint consistory. In practice it becomes an easy escape without due call to repentance.

The practice of “erasure” undermines much discipline in the RCUS and some of the ministers consider it to be a big problem. Erasure simply means to erase someone’s name from the membership list. In the Canadian Reformed Churches erasure is an exception. To the best of my knowledge it is only practiced when someone leaves without a request for an attestation and his location becomes unknown. Even then, his name is not quickly erased, but time is given in the hope of return and repentance. Such circumstances may eventually be considered silent withdrawal from the church.

The RCUS constitution speaks about erasure in several articles. Thus article 119 states that “If a member is negligent in partaking of the Holy Communion, or refuses to

contribute to the support of the Church, or continually absents himself from public worship, such conduct, in one or all of these requirements, shall be regarded as an offense against the Church, and he shall be admonished by the pastor and elders. If after admonition he continues in such negligence of duty, the Spiritual Council (i.e. minister and elders) shall notify him that he is no longer in good and regular standing. If after not less than six months and not more than one year of such suspension he continues in such neglect of duty, the Spiritual Council shall erase his name." In article 33 we read: "If the minister against whom the charges are pending shall have abandoned the ministry or declared himself independent, his name shall be erased, or he shall be deposed or excommunicated, as the case may be."

The ministers admit that erasure is used much more than discipline. The negligent members are admonished by the minister and elders, but do not receive the benefit of being called back through church discipline in the way in which the Lord has instituted it. May the Lord grant courage and strength to those minister among them who would like to correct this matter. It is not always easy to agree upon constitutional changes which will help in this respect.

Relations with other churches

At this time the RCUS is no member of any ecumenical organization. They have made inquiries about the ICRC and sent an observer to the last meeting held in Langley, B.C. The RCUS has fraternal relations with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Reformed and Presbyterian Church of North America (RPNA), and the Reformed Church in Zaire (RCZ). This means that they recognize each other as true churches, have pulpit exchanges, receive each other's attestations and send delegates to each other's ecclesiastical meetings.

There is no formal relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches, but there has been some informal contact. One of their ministers teaches at Mid American Reformed Seminary (MARS). For the time being, the theological students of the RCUS are directed to this seminary.

Church Order

Instead of a Church Order like we have, the RCUS has a constitution as a "denomination" as well as local constitutions. Generally speaking these constitutions seem to be a mixture of Reformed and Presbyterian church polity.

Instead of speaking about "ecclesiastical assemblies" they speak about judicatories and the whole system is set up much like a civil legal system. The consistory is the lower court and the synod is the higher court.

There are four judicatories in the RCUS. They are the consistory (pastors, elders and deacons), the spiritual council (pastor and elders), classis and synod.

The office of minister and elder is considered to be a life-time calling. Not ministers, but elders take periods of rest. During these periods they are referred to as "inactive elders." Inactive elders can be called upon for advice and in emergency circumstances. They can also become active again.

It is the consistory's task to take care of the daily affairs of the congregation, including the calling of a minister, his support, keeping church property and records, taking care of the congregational finances, etc. Some of these things can only be done after consultation with and agreement from the congregation.

The task of the spiritual council is to "watch over the members of the congregation, to guard the doctrine of Christ, and to maintain wholesome discipline." (article 72 of the constitution.) Classis is considered to be an ecclesiastical judicatory which is convened at intervals or when necessary. It continues from one meeting to the next as is clear from the wording in the constitution. In article 79 of the constitution we read about "the annual meeting of a Classis" and that "the ministers residing within a district designated by Synod" are its members along with "elders delegated by pastoral charges situated within these

limits." Classis has its own executive consisting of a president and stated clerk who are assigned certain tasks while classis is not convened.

Synod is much like classis. The only difference is that to classis only ministers and delegated elders of a certain district are sent, while to synod all the ministers and an elder from each congregation are delegated. Synod meets in two ways, in "general convention" and in "delegated body." In the latter form the delegates are there as representatives of their local congregations.

Like classis, synod has its own executive which continues to perform certain functions while synod is not convened. In article 101 of the constitution we are told that "The Synod shall diligently prosecute the work of Home Missions, of Foreign Missions, of Christian Education, and of Ministerial Relief by committees, which are to be elected and governed in their proceedings by rules established by Synod. At the annual meeting of the Synod each committee shall submit a report of its operations and a statement of its present condition."

Although church polity is not necessarily a matter of faithfulness and unfaithfulness and we agree in our Church Order that on "minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected." We see here a need for further discussion.

Conclusion

The church at Carman will continue local contact with the RCUS with the stated objective of coming with a request to the federation to recognize the RCUS as true churches of Christ Jesus. We do not have to be hasty and may certainly reserve judgment for some time while discussions and attempts to convince each other continue. In this whole matter we may not overlook that our federation has churches in America, and the question of how these churches are to be united in a practical way, should they be recognized may not be overlooked either. It was for this reason that our deputies at Synod Leeuwarden have rightfully reminded our Dutch sister churches to first consult with the Canadian Reformed Churches before extending a sister church relationship to the RCUS. Now that Synod Leeuwarden has made this decision, it does not mean that we as Canadian Reformed Churches must feel pressured into making a hasty decision concerning this matter.

A note of disappointment must be added. In 1987 the consistory of Carman made the first contacts with the RCUS. We were received in a very hospitable way and words of welcome were expressed. They expressed much appreciation for having visited with them. We have made a number of visits and reports, but we have seen and heard very little initiative from them. Only one official return visit was made by one of their ministers. Perhaps they do not have the same resources, but we are often left with the impression that if we no longer make contact with them, we would not hear much from them. This is perhaps also related to their way of thinking about the church in a pluriform way. They seem to be content with being a denomination and see no urgency to strive for ecclesiastical unity.

One more thing must be added. The RCUS is very diverse within itself. Ministers have come from many different colleges and backgrounds and each brings with him his own opinions. It is difficult to make a fair evaluation. The opinions of the men we spoke to differ on certain points. In this article, the official papers were consulted as much as possible. However, the congregational life cannot be overlooked either. The average age of the membership is high. The ministers we spoke to expressed concern about finding suitable elders to serve in the churches. Those to whom we spoke appeared to be very faithful and dedicated and offered up much for their dedication to the Lord. To judge the hearts of men belongs to the Lord. It is our task – also in ecclesiastical contact – to examine whether we are and remain faithful to God's revealed Word. With Him in mind we will continue our work.

APPENDIX VIII

RESPONSE FROM THE REV. R. GROSSMAN OF THE RCUS (*CLARION*, MAY 10, 1990)

THE RCUS, A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE

The following article is in response to the article entitled "Contact with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)" by Rev. P.K.A. de Boer in the January 4, 1991 issue of the *Clarion*. This writer, along with many other members of the RCUS, welcomes the interest of our brothers and sisters in the Canadian Reformed Churches. We have in recent years become appreciative acquaintances of Rev. Kingma through his visits to several of our synod meetings. This writer has come to know Dr. Van Dam of your Seminary, and has been a subscriber to *Reformed Perspective* for a number of years. He has also had extended contacts with your sister churches, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt), over the past six years.

We appreciate Rev. de Boer's article, including those somewhat critical areas. It shows a sincere interest in seeking to know those whom he believes to be brethren in the Lord, as well as a strong commitment to maintaining the truth according to the Word of God. We are going to point out some errors of fact, which no doubt are almost inevitable in attempting to introduce someone we ourselves do not know too well; and we are going to take issue with some of his conclusions. However, we do this in a brotherly manner as those who respect highly that which we have found among you, and as those who know that our RCUS is, like every other denomination or federation of churches, somewhat less than perfect.

It will be good if readers of this article have the January 4 issue of the *Clarion* at hand to better place in context the things we will refer to in Rev. de Boer's article. We will first mention a number of matters of factual inaccuracy which may have little impact on the matter of relations between our churches, but which are important from an historical point of view.

First of all, the idea expressed on page 5 of the *Clarion* article that the union of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches in Prussia in 1817 under one administration (it was not actually a merger) resulted in a new constitution being adopted by the North American German Reformed Synod in 1819 in which the Heidelberg Catechism was received as the exclusive confessional standard, is mistaken at several points. It was not a "constitution" that was adopted in 1819 but rather a "definition of the rights and activities of the Synod in its relations to the Classes" (H.M.J. Klein, *History of the Eastern Synod of the RCUS*, p. 106). Such material might rightly be seen as part of a "constitution," but it was by actual content and purpose a good bit less than a "new constitution."

Furthermore, there is no evidence whatsoever that the naming of the Heidelberg Catechism alone among the church's creeds in these articles was in any way related to the Prussian church union of 1817. First, there was not enough time between 1817 and 1819 for such pressure to arise, cross the ocean, and bear such fruit. Second, just one year later the 1820 German Reformed Synod rejected a plan for a union seminary with the Lutherans in North America, even though they had had discussions with the Lutherans about this idea before 1817. Third, the German Reformed continued discussions about merger with the Dutch Reformed in North America in the years following 1819, while at the same time they drifted farther from the Lutherans, with whom they had earlier agreed in rejecting the overtures of Count Zinzendorf for merger under the Moravian banner.

Real influence from the Prussian church union of 1817 came to the German Reformed Church in the U.S. in 1844 with the importation of the Rev. Philip Schaff of Germany to teach in the denominational seminary.

Even the statement that the Catechism was here received "as the exclusive confessional standard," needs some clarification. One of the 1819 articles states that Synod may

make rules "that conform to the Word of God and are not contrary to the Heidelberg Catechism and the Ordinances of the Synod." While this indicates that the operating confession in view in 1819 was the Catechism, this is not the language of creedal adoption, excluding all others. This is particularly important in view of the fact that from 1748 to 1792 the annual minutes of the German Reformed Coetus speak often of the Catechism without mentioning the other creeds. This is so even though the Coetus until 1793 was under the direct control of the Classis Amsterdam and its own Constitution of 1748, both of which required subscription to "the Heidelberg Catechism, all the formulas of unity and the Synod of Dordt." As noted above, what was adopted in 1819 was not an entire new constitution, but an addition to earlier regulations for synod, which some have argued would include the Constitution of 1748.

Another historical lapse is found on page 6 of this *Clarion* issue. The Mercersberg Theology, which arose from 1844-1850, was a kind of high-church liturgicalism, developed by Drs. Philip Schaff and John Nevin some 60 years before Barthian theology was known even to Karl Barth (who was born in 1886). Schaff and Nevin had rationalist tendencies but they were not the secret inventors of Neo-orthodoxy.

Again, the statement on this page that all the "classes of the RCUS had voted in favour" of the 1934 Evangelical and Reformed merger is mistaken. Four RCUS classes had voted to oppose the merger before the General Synod adopted it. But after the General Synod vote, the merger was accepted without vote by all of the classes as an accomplished fact, except for the Eureka Classis which alone decided to vote on and then to reject this merger. Also, the next sentence implying that the name "Eureka Classis" was borrowed from the name of the city of Eureka, South Dakota, is historically inaccurate. This name, "Eureka Classis," was chosen from the Greek perfect form of the word *euriskoo* (meaning "I find") to express satisfaction that the conservative Reformed party in the Dakotas had found in 1910 a constitutional way to maintain a conservative ecclesiastical life within a liberal denomination. This provision allowed a different language classis, Classis Eureka, to be formed on the ground of the already established Dakota Classis.

Important detail corrections to note are on page 6, that Manitowoc is in Wisconsin, not Pennsylvania, and on page 7, that the pastor who recently left the RCUS for another denomination has been elected president of his Classis, and not of the RCUS Synod. Unfortunately the inaccuracy contained in this article does not end with matters of only historical interest. The contention, also on page 6, that the ministers and teachers of theology of the RCUS make no further subscription to the creed than the one made by licentiates is in error. Ministers and teachers of theology are required at ordination to make a considerably stronger subscription than this. The form for the ordination of a minister requires an oath binding him to "honestly and without reservation embrace the Heidelberg Catechism with the conviction that the same is an exact summary of the system of truth of Holy Scripture," and to "promise to teach and defend the same in good faith and reject all doctrines conflicting therewith" (*Directory of Worship of the RCUS*). Not only is this a good bit stronger than the subscription of licentiates, our Church in recent years has deposed a minister for not agreeing to the words of Question 115 of the Catechism that God "so strictly enjoins the Ten Commandments" upon His people. This man held that the Fourth Commandment has been abrogated. We would reject the idea that this subscription is "weak," or, for that matter, that our Church's holding to the creed ought to be suspect.

Another mistaken impression is left by the point made about the subscription of elders and deacons. Indeed these office bearers do not "sign" a form of subscription, but they are required by verbal oath to take the same form of subscription as that taken by licentiates. Thus the impression given that no subscription is required is misleading.

On the issue of Theonomy, we would like to comment that it is difficult at this stage of the development of that school of thought to define "Theonomy" to everyone's satisfaction. Thus it is difficult to discipline those who might call themselves "Theonomists." Discipline should be applied for substantive denial of the creeds, not for the use of a label.

On the doctrine of the church we will doubtless have to carry on discussions. We have not come to the unique view of the use of the word "church" that is held among you. However, we do have much in common in our views of the marks of the church, etc. Your view also raises some questions. If those who hold to many biblical teachings but who are not entirely Reformed may not be called "church," what are they? Scripture uses the Greek word *ekklesia* to refer to an assembly of unbelievers in Acts 19:32, 39. We have no problem using the marks of the church to identify the true and the false churches, however we find it somewhat difficult to attempt to neatly pigeonhole every body containing Christians into either of those categories. What about other federations of churches with which you are in a sister church relation, do you know in detail the faithfulness of each congregation? We would say, for example, that your churches are evidently "less faithful" in obedience to the Second Commandment than are our churches. Does this mean we must reject you as "churches?"

We are surprised to find reference in Rev. de Boer's article to "easy transfer" to other denominations. There is more or less easy transfer to denominations we know to be conservatively Reformed, and with whom we have fraternal relations. On the other hand, the definition of an "orthodox Protestant church" is to our knowledge and practice not a wide open door to our Spiritual Councils for easy transfer to unfaithful "churches," but a recognition that an "orthodox Protestant church" might carry the name "Presbyterian," or omit the name "Reformed" or "Presbyterian" entirely, even while holding to biblical doctrine. Our Constitution and practice require that persons who join other denominations without approval be disciplined, not given certificates of dismissal. We believe that the conclusion that our teaching about the church "leads one to go to the church one's own choice rather than where the Lord calls His people together," is quite misleading. Our pastors preach and work against this very idea regularly.

Further in this line of thinking, the idea that "erasure" of name is part of an easy transfer picture is in our view mistaken. Erasure is clearly labeled in our Constitution as an act of discipline, never to be taken lightly, and never to be applied without a good deal of pastoral contact and care, even as the constitutional articles quoted in the *Clarion* article indicate. Erasure, like excommunication, does end one's position under the care of the Spiritual Council of the church. However, we do live in a world where sometimes pastoral care cannot in God's providence bring the straying sheep into obedience. We would be most interested to hear what your elders do with respect to a member excommunicated or reluctantly erased. Do you then proceed to other steps of pastoral care? Or do you also see that person as having left God's church and kingdom? We would argue that our Constitution does require the elders to call a person back through church discipline in the way which the Lord has instituted it, quite in contrast to Rev de Boer's statement on page 8. Indeed, his statement that Matthew 18 is mentioned only in an article of our Constitution dealing with "personal injuries" fails to note that this part of Scripture is also referred to in another article on the general discipline of members.

Again, the constitutional provision for the resignation of ministers and approval of such by their classis mentioned on page 8 of the *Clarion* is directed to the acceptance of calls, not to the handling of "difficulties in the congregation." Doubtless there have been times when ministers unfortunately have taken this "easy way out" when they have faced difficulties, and doubtless there are times when ministers ought to leave their present place of service. But we are at a loss to imagine where Rev. de Boer got information leading him to say, "When there are difficulties in the congregation this is a course of action that is usually followed." During the past thirty years we ourselves have encountered, and seen fellow pastors encounter, many difficulties in congregations which were handled by pastoral care and discipline without ever a thought of the pastor resigning. We can think of only one or two instances in which a pastor resigned because of such difficulties.

We must not prolong this response but a few additional observations need to be made. We find the statement on page 8 that "The emphasis is that one is saved by God's providence and therefore the hearing and knowing of God's Word is considered to be less important," to be inaccurate and somewhat insulting. We know of no RCUS minis-

ter who does not seek to make the accurate preaching of God's Word the heart of his ministry, and of no congregation that does not glory in good preaching. In practice, not every pastor is always entirely satisfied with the response of his congregation, nor are all congregations entirely satisfied that their pastors always employ the most effective methods. But to conclude that hearing and knowing God's Word is unimportant to either pastors or people is contradictory to our own lifelong knowledge of the churches. The further conclusion that our churches are filled with old people and very few young, is contradicted by the statistics from 1990 which show that more than one-fourth of our members are baptized children who have not yet made profession of faith (which is usually made between the ages of 14-16). We do have rural congregations where economic conditions and an at-times weakened ministry have left mostly older people. However, most of our congregations include many babies, children and young people. Furthermore over the years we have attracted substantial numbers of people to our churches who are not of our own background or not of Christian background at all. These are not signs of dying churches.

We might also note matters of terminology, such as our use of the word "judicatory" to refer to ruling assemblies as differences perhaps more of wording than of function. Other issues might be raised, but before closing we wish to note what we see as a tendency in this *Clarion* article to look at all things through the spectacles of the history, practices and terminology of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This is to some extent unavoidable. We all come from somewhere, but we do not believe that our unique situation should become a controlling interest in examining others. Rather we believe that a living adherence to the doctrines of Scripture, and to worship and fellowship based on those doctrines should be our major criteria. Acts 2:42 describes what we take to be the organic life of a true church.

Our hearty greetings to the readers of the *Clarion* and our best wishes to Rev. de Boer. We realize our brother did not mean to give a distorted view of the RCUS and that his sources of information within the RCUS were perhaps not as well-informed as they might be. We trust that this response may improve your knowledge of the RCUS. May God grant us a growing and unifying relationship as churches of Jesus Christ.

Rev. Robert Grossmann
Orange City, Iowa

RCUS, Response

I would like to thank Rev. R. Grossmann for his article and the corrections he gives. These kind of responses help to make us known to each other. Let me make a few small remarks.

1. I am thankful that Rev. Grossmann noticed that my look on things are "through the spectacles of the history, practices and terminology of the Canadian Reformed Churches." It reflects my conviction that the Lord has granted, with many weaknesses, the Canadian Reformed Churches to be faithful to His Word. If we are to find unity, and this is my desire, it must be on the foundation of God's Word.

2. I am also thankful that Rev. Grossmann found the sentence he mentions "somewhat insulting." It shows that he would not want this kind of tendency in the RCUS. Perhaps it was not phrased well enough, but it was not my intention to make this a kind of accusation. In the context, I expressed appreciation for RCUS ministers who see the need for and promote a second worship service. I was contemplating reasons why these attempts are resisted. Perhaps Rev. Grossmann could give his opinion on why a second worship service is resisted by members in the RCUS.

3. Concerning erasure, I would like to point out that there was a request at Northern Plains Classis to their synod recently held at Garner Iowa to change the constitution article(s) concerning this point. I understand the reason for this request was in line with what I had written. I feel disappointed that the synod did not think it necessary to look further into whether these changes should be made.

4. Concerning the subscription form, I am still not sure from Rev. Grossmann's article nor from the ministers I spoke to, whether its intention is, like that in the Presbyterian system to be bound to "the system of doctrine as found in the (confession)" or, like (continental) Reformed, to be "bound to the Word of God as confessed in the (confession)." I am not sure whether those asked really understood the difference. Perhaps Rev. Grossmann can inform us more clearly some day.

All this shows that much more discussion is still necessary on these and other points not mentioned. Again, a thank-you to Rev. Grossmann, and may the Lord grant the strength to continue these discussions in a brotherly way. We will not hide the differences but openly talk about them so that, the Lord willing, we together may stand on the one foundation which is laid, namely Christ and His work as revealed in Scripture.

Rev. P.K.A. de Boer

APPENDIX IX

LETTERS FROM THE RCUS - INTERCHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE
(JAN. 11, 1991; JULY 23, 1991; MARCH 16, 1992)

REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES
Interchurch Relations Committee

January 11, 1991

Dr. J. Visscher
5734 - 191 A Street
Surrey, B.C.
Canada V3J4N9

Dear Dr. Visscher,

Greetings in the name of our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may have already noted that the Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCUS has a new chairman. Rev. George Syms is no longer serving in that capacity and "yours truly", Rev. Jonathan Merica, is filling that office. I look forward to working together in a blessed relationship with our beloved brethren of other denominations in the months to come.

I am writing this letter to inform you of our desire to invite you to our next Synod meeting, and also to express my desire to receive an invitation from you to attend your next meeting. You may also receive a letter from our stated clerk, but I am writing in advance to insure ample time for notification.

The Reformed Church in the U.S. cordially invites the Canadian Reformed Church to send an observer and to bring greetings at our 1991 Synod meeting.

This year our annual meeting will be held in Garner, Iowa. Our Synod will commence at 7:30 P.M., April 2, 1991 with a worship service and will adjourn April 5, 1991. Please have the observer contact Rev. Howard Hart at (515) 923-3060 regarding arrangements for pick up at the airport and lodging. Your observer will be provided with meals and lodging during his stay with us. He will also be given an opportunity to address Synod according to the agenda. You will receive an agenda when it is available. I have enclosed an accommodation request which is to be completed and mailed to the host church in Garner, Iowa at the address given on the request form.

We would appreciate receiving a letter authorizing your observer to represent your denomination. Please send the letter of authorization to:

Interchurch Relations Committee
Rev. Jonathan Merica, Chairman
245 E. Vine Street
Lodi, CA 95240 • (209) 367-0552

Thank you for your kind attention in this matter and may God bless our churches.

Peace be multiplied unto you.

Rev. Jonathan Merica

Rev. Jonathan Merica, Chairman
RCUS Interchurch Relations

July 23, 1991

Canadian Reformed Churches
% Dr. J. Visscher
5734-191 A Street
Surrey, B.C.
Canada, V354N9

Dear Dr. Visscher,

As chairman of the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee, I'm writing this letter to further implement the desire expressed by the RCUS Synod of 1991 to establish fraternal relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. That desire was expressed at our Synod by moving and carrying recommendation #4 of the Standing RCUS Committee on Ecumenicity which is as follows:

"That the RCUS continue to investigate establishing fraternal relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches including sending an observer to their 1992 Synod in Lincoln, Ontario."

I have enclosed some materials that should be useful in your evaluation of the Reformed Church in the U.S. If other materials are needed please contact me at (209) 367-0552. My church address is:

Rev. Jonathan Merica
245 E. Vine Street
Lodi, CA 95240

We sincerely hope that establishing fraternal relations may become a reality that we may work together for the advancement of our Savior's Kingdom.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Jonathan Merica

Rev. Jonathan Merica, Chairman
Interchurch Relations Committee

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.

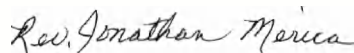
The purpose of this letter is first to encourage the Canadian Reformed Churches to have an observer present at our 246th Annual Synodical meeting which shall convene on the evening of April 20, 1992 and shall adjourn April 23, 1992.

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, Chairman
RCUS Interchurch Relations

APPENDIX X

LETTER FROM THE REFORMED CHURCH IN ZAIRE RE: RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CANRC (JUNE 27, 1991)



EGLISE REFORMEE AU ZAIRE

Reformed Church in Zaire

BIEGE DU SYNOBE GENERAL BP 5011

LUBUMBASHI, SHABA

REPUBLIQUE DU ZAIRE

REV. KAZADI LUKONDA NGUBE-NGUBE

Moderateur et Représentant Légal

Compte bancaire n° 430-0653033-OL
BCZ.-Lubumbashi.

Viret:

Date JUNE 27, 1991

Viret:

Concerne : PARTNERSHIP OF TWO CHURCHES

The Canadian Reformed churches
c/o Dr. J. VICOCHER
5754 - 151 A Street
Surrey, B.C.
CANADA V3C 4M0

Dear Brothers in Christ,

We have a great pleasure to write you this letter in order to ask you the relationship of our two sister churches.

We are a young Reformed Church in Zaire (ERZA) based on the Doctrine of:

- 1.- Belgica Confession of Gans de Brès (1561)
- 2.- Catechism of Heidelberg (1563) and
- 3.- Canons of Dort (1618-1619) to which is added the Ecumenical Creeds.

The "ERZA" is established on the fourth large national territory of Zaire and has a total of 70 parishes/congregations in town and countryside or rural presbyteries.

If we have written you this letter, it's simply because we want you to accept our request to maintain our spiritual and moral relationships with your church. Our wish would be also to consider us among your church partners.
JOHN 10:16 ; 13:35. God bless you for his glory!

Yours sincerely,

Rev. KAZADI LUKONDA NGUBE - NGUBE
Moderator & Legal Representative



Encls.: Project of the church's development for assist. us

APPENDIX XI

LETTER FROM THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, MAY 27, 1992, DEALING WITH "FRATERNAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CHURCHES."

At Edinburgh and within the Free Assembly Hall there on Tuesday 19th day of May 1992 which day the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland being met and constituted.

Inter Alia

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Select Committee on Assembly Arrangements and Ecumenical Relations (B) Ecumenical Relations.

It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

4. The General Assembly approve and adopt the following statement regarding Inter-Church Relations:

FRATERNAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CHURCHES


There should be one simple rule to the following effect.

Fraternal Relations should exist between Churches that openly and practically profess the true faith of Christ as summarised in one or more of the classical Reformed symbols - ie the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgian Confession, the Canons of the Synod of Dort.

Certain duties and courtesies devolve upon Churches sustaining fraternal relations.

1. There should be a spirit of cordial love and trust as becomes brothers in the faith.
2. There should be an attitude of mutual helpfulness. Each should be willing to share problems and difficulties with the others. By the same token each should be allowed to exhort to more exact obedience any who appeared to relax faithfulness to their avowed confession. This should not invite to inquisitorial interference but to strengthening one another in love for Christ.
3. There should be willingness to accept certificates of communicant membership, normally without personal examination.
4. There should be in the highest courts of the Churches a cordial welcome to visiting delegates from other Churches recognised as in fraternal relationship. This need not amount to according membership in the court to the visiting delegate.
5. There should be willingness to allow ministers of one Church access to the pulpits of fraternal Churches as a matter of courtesy.
6. Churches should exchange copies of the Acts and Proceedings of their highest courts or at least inform one another of major decisions.

Extracted from the Records of the
General Assembly by


Clerk of Assembly

APPENDIX XII

COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD LINCOLN 1992

Esteemed Brethren,

In light of the additional correspondence received since we submitted our Report to you, it was decided that Synod would be best served if we published a Supplement which would serve to bring you up to date on the latest developments.

I. THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA (FRCA)

1. Correspondence

- a. We received a letter dated Sept. 9, 1992, in which the Deputies informed us about those decisions of Synod Bedfordale which have a direct bearing on us.
- b. We received another letter dated Oct. 12, 1992, in which the Deputies appointed for the ICRC asked us to as yet respond to a previous letter dealing with their concerns with respect to the ICRC. We replied that a letter had been sent to them on March 4, 1991, in which we expressed our reluctance to comment on this matter because it appeared to be an internal matter for the Australian sister churches to deal with. In addition, we referred them to what our Report to Synod Lincoln 1992 say about the ICRC.

2. Acts of Synod Bedfordale 1992

Synod Bedfordale 1992 met from May 18 - June 8, 1992. Some of the following highlights have been gleaned from the Acts:

- a. Synod decided to adopt a four-fold distinction of delegates from other churches, namely, delegates from sister churches, from churches with which Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact (TEC) has been established, delegates with which there is official contact, delegates from churches seeking contact with the FRCA.
- b. With respect to the Training for the Ministry, Synod decided to continue to support the Theological College of the CanRC in Hamilton and to request the churches to forward \$37.50 per communicant member annually for this cause, starting July 1, 1992. The churches were also encouraged to hold regular collections for the Theological Seminary in Pusan, Korea. Correspondence will also continue with the Theological University in Kampen, the Netherlands, in order to maintain contact and obtain information.
- c. Concerning the matter of the *Book of Praise* and the Creeds, Synod decided not to adopt a proposed revised melody and text for Hymn 1. The proposed texts for the Ecumenical Creeds will be studied and a report sent to the next Synod. The new translation of the Canons of Dort was accepted, as were the minor linguistic changes made to the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism.
- d. New deputies were appointed to review the provisionally adopted Church Order and to advise the next Synod on further improvements. The sister churches will be consulted in this matter.
- e. Regarding Bible translation, Synod 1992 decided to recommend to the churches that the New King James Version (NKJV) be used for study, instruction and family purposes but to withhold final endorsement for use in

the worship services, until the churches have become more familiar with it and more study has been made of the NKJV in comparison to the New International Version (NIV). Synod also decided to communicate this decision to the Canadian Reformed Churches “urging the brotherhood in Canada to reach a similar decision.”

- f. Synod adopted new rules for sister relations, as recommended by the deputies. These Rules for Exercising Sister Relations are:

“1. Sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world.

2. The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.

3. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts or their Minutes and, otherwise by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible in translation).

4. The churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishment of relations with third parties.

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” (ACTS 1992, Art.95).

Synod also decided “to request the Dutch sister churches to accept and adopt these rules as common rules for our church relations; and to do the same for our other sister churches” (ACTS 1992, Art.95).

- g. A considerable amount of time was spent by this Synod dealing with relations with various churches throughout the world. With respect to these churches, we mention the following (in the order that they appear in the Acts):

i. The Canadian Reformed Churches – it was decided to continue sister relations and deputies were urged to give more content to the contact, especially with respect to the rules for sister relations.

ii. The Presbyterian Church in Korea – it was decided to continue sister relations. Synod noted that there had been an improvement in communication.

iii. The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa – it was decided to continue sister relations.

iv. The Reformed Churches in Sumba Timor Savu, Indonesia – it was decided to continue sister relations.

- v. The Gereja Masehi Musyafir Churches in Timor, Indonesia – it was decided to continue contact with these churches and to gather more information about them.
- vi. The Lembaga Reformed Injili Churches, Indonesia – deputies were instructed to gather information about these churches.
- vii. The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia – it was decided to work towards mutual recognition of each other as true churches and to continue to study and discuss remaining areas of concern.
- viii. The Reformed Churches of Australia – it was decided to appoint new deputies.
- ix. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – Synod decided to continue the sister relationship.
- x. The Reformed Churches of New Zealand – it was decided to maintain the contact and to work towards resolving outstanding issues.
- xi. The Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore – it was decided to continue the contact with this church. Synod also apologized for the printing of a report which contained information not edifying to the ERCS.
- xii. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia – it was decided not to appoint new deputies with these small churches but to leave contacts to the local churches.
- xiii. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland – it was decided to appoint new deputies with the mandate to use the existing Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact to improve the quantity of discussion and exchange of information so that the two churches will get to know each other better.
- xiv. The Reformed Church in Zaire – it was decided not to accede to their request to establish relations with this church. Synod cited as a consideration the fact that their small bond of churches might become overburdened with contacts.
- xv. The Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines received the same answer as the Reformed Church in Zaire.
- xvi. The Free Church of Scotland – it was decided to appoint new deputies and to instruct them to ascertain whether the FCS had ever accepted the offer of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact made by the FRCA. Deputies were told to use the rules for TEC to improve their contacts and to use them to work towards eventual sister relations.
- xvii. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland – it was decided to appoint new deputies but to maintain contact with this church at a low level until such time as an investigation of the RPCA has been concluded.
- h. With regard to the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), Synod decided to continue the membership until a study of their concerns has been completed and the consultation with the sister churches has been finalized. It was also decided to send two delegates to the 1993 meeting of the ICRC in Zwolle, the Netherlands, as well as to convene a meeting of the sister churches prior or coinciding with this meeting.

3. Considerations

- a. The FRCA are to be commended for the generous financial support which they give to our Theological College in Hamilton.

- b. It is evident that the FRCA have come to a provisional decision on the matter of Bible translation and that they request the Canadian Reformed Churches to come to a similar decision. When Synod Lincoln 1992 deals with the matter of Bible translation, it should take into consideration the decision of our Australian sister churches.
- c. It is also evident that the FRCA has adopted new rules for sister relations and that they desire the CanRC to adopt their rules as “common rules” for all sister churches. While we laud the aim of the FRCA, we do have certain reservations about the rules that they propose.

In the first place, we find that some of them are excessively wordy (compare their rule 1 and 2 to our proposed 1, their rule 6 to our proposed 5). We are of the opinion that new rules should be as concise as possible, in keeping with our present rules.

In the second place, we question the need for rules 1 and 2 as separate rules and are of the opinion that the positive and negative should be combined, as we have attempted to do.

In the third place, we do not believe that the expression “to give account” in their rule 4 and our present rule “e” is a fitting one, seeing that it gives an impression of lording it over another church federation. Neither the FRCA nor the RCN ever “gave account” to the CanRC when they entered into sister relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea. The CanRC never “gave account” to the sister churches when we established Ecclesiastical Contact with the OPC. No sister church need justify its actions in this regard; however, it does need to inform the sister churches about its actions.

When Synod Lincoln 1992 deals with “rules for ecclesiastical fellowship,” it should take into account the request of the FRCA and mandate deputies to respond to it.

- d. Seeing that the FRCA request a special meeting of sister churches prior to or coinciding with the ICRC meeting in 1993 to discuss their concerns about the ICRC, your Committee proposes that the CanRC delegates be mandated to attend.

4. Conclusion

From the correspondence and the Acts of Synod 1992, the Committee may gratefully conclude that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia desire to be faithful to the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.

5. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends to Synod 1992 that we continue to maintain a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia in accordance with the adopted rules.

II. THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Your Committee wishes to inform you of a fact that may not have received sufficient attention in our Report. This relates to the confessional basis of the Free Church of Scotland. The FC has, in addition to the Westminster Standards, also adopted the Scottish Confession of Faith of 1560 (see: ACTS 1986, p.194, 3, c).

This Confession further clarifies their position on a number of important issues. For example, on the church Chapter 16 says,

“As we believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so we believe that from the beginning there has been, now is, and to the end of the world shall be, one Kirk, that is to say, one company and multitude of men chosen by God,

who rightly worship and embrace Him by true faith in Christ Jesus, who is the only Head of the Kirk, even as it is the body and spouse of Christ Jesus.”

On the marks (or notes) of the church, Chapter 18 says,

“The notes of the true Kirk, therefore, we believe, confess, and avow to be: first, the true preaching of the Word of God, in which God has revealed Himself to us, as the writings of the prophets and apostles declare; secondly, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, with which must be associated the Word and promise of God to seal and confirm them in our hearts; and lastly, ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God’s Word prescribes, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished.”

On the admission to the sacraments, Chapter 23 says,

“But we hold that the Supper of the Lord is only for those who are of the household of faith and can try and examine themselves both in their faith and their duty to their neighbours. Those who eat and drink at that holy table without faith, or without peace and goodwill to their brethren, eat unworthily. This is the reason why ministers in our Kirk make public and individual examination of those who are to be admitted to the table of the Lord Jesus.”

III. THE REFORMED CHURCH IN ZAIRE (RCZ)

Your Committee has recently been informed that the Reformed Church in Zaire is not the same church that has a sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Apparently the official name of this sister church is the Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire (ERCZ).

In spite of this misunderstanding, the official and repeated request of the RCZ for sister church relations still stands. Should Synod 1992 decide to mandate the Committee to investigate the RCZ, it should also include the ERCZ and instruct the Committee to investigate what the differences are between these two churches. If this investigation is to be fruitful, it will require the Committee to take up contact with both the RCN and the RCUS seeing that both have sister church relations with the ERCZ.

IV. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (ICRC)

1. Correspondence

- a. The Secretary of the ICRC, the Rev. M. van Beveren, has informed us that the following churches have requested membership in the ICRC:

the Free Reformed Church of North America,
the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,
the Reformed Church in the U.S.

Although the agenda has not been finalized, the following topics and speakers have been decided on:

Rev.A.M. Fraser, Redemptive-Historical Preaching.
Dr.N.H. Gootjes, Catechism Preaching.
Rev.C.J. Haak, Reformed Mission.
Prof.J. Kamphuis, Tolerance.
Prof.A.I. Macleod, Christology and Mission.
Prof.W.N.S. Wilson, Prophecy Today.

One more topic and speaker remains to be assigned.

- b. On Aug.28, 1992, the Secretary sent us two reports that will be dealt with at the ICRC in Zwolle 1993. The first report deals with missions and gives an overview of the missionary activities of the member churches. The second report deals with theological affirmation. In it the Committee states that

“it is not necessary to develop . . . a statement” on what is a true church. Furthermore, the Committee states that it “was struck by the apparent similarity between the several sets of rules regarding ecclesiastical fellowship that were accessible to us.” It also concludes “that there exists a consensus between the Reformed Confessions concerning the marks of the true church. Recognizing one another as true churches has consequences with respect to admission to the pulpit, admission to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper and acceptance of attestations or certificates of consistories or sessions.”

Copies of both reports have been appended to this Supplementary Report.

2. Considerations

Although the Reports on Missions and Theological Affirmation have not been evaluated yet in detail by your Committee, it appears that the latter takes away any fears that there may have been about the ICRC attempting to come to a new statement about the church.

3. Conclusion

Your Committee continues to maintain its Recommendations as stated on page 23 of our Report. In addition, the Committee recommends that Dr. J. Faber be appointed an advisor to the CanRC delegation to the ICRC 1993. Under our original recommendation he would be present at the meeting, but only in his capacity as Convener of the Committee on Theological Affirmation. Should he be designated an official advisor on behalf of our churches, he can be involved in all of the pertinent discussions of the Conference.

Respectfully submitted by your Committee
October 28, 1992

Mr. H.A. Berends
Mr. A. Nap
Rev. Cl. Stam
Dr. J. Vanderstoep
Rev. M. Vanderwel
Dr. J. Visscher (convener-secretary)