

APPENDIX V

REPORT ON THE ARCHIVES OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

January 1989

Submitted to:

The Church for the General Archives, Burlington-East
The Church for the Inspection of the Archives, Burlington-West
The General Synod of Winnipeg 1989

1. DOCUMENTS OF GENERAL SYNOD

In the past months, a considerable amount of work has been done in order to make the Archives more easily accessible for future use. This was a necessary undertaking since the documents were stored in envelopes, folders, and binders of all shapes and sizes, without any index of the documents present.

Every document mentioned in the agendas has now been listed, in a consistent order for each Synod. Missing documents are marked as such in the indexes.

All documents of each synod have been bound in one or more legal-size press-binders. The Printed Acts of every Synod are stored separately. For quick reference, an extra copy of each index has been placed in a special binder.

CONTENTS

- a. 20 legal-size binders containing the documents of all Synods held since 1954
- b. Printed Acts of all 11 Synods held
- c. Copies of the *Book of Praise*, editions 1961, 1972, and 1984; Supplement 1967; Hymn Section 1979; Section Liturgical Forms 1981; The Three Forms of Unity (no date)
- d. Two copies of "Op Weg naar een Engelse Reformatorische Psalm bundel"
- e. Five extra copies of seven Synods and two extra copies of the Synods of 1965 and 1980. There are no extra copies of the Synods of 1962 and 1983
- f. Yearbooks of the years 1952, 1954, 1958, and of the years 1969-1988 with the exception of the years 1975, 1976, and 1980

MISSING DOCUMENTS

- a. Synod 1958 (Acts Art. 7, Agenda 15b)
Proposal Toronto re: Correspondence with Churches Abroad
- b. Synod 1965 (Acts Art. 7, Agenda J1)
Report Committee Synod 1962 *Book of Praise*
- c. Synod 1974 (Acts Art. 85, Agenda D4)
Letter Oosterhoff re: Draft Translation Heidelberg Catechism
- d. Synod 1974 (Acts Art. 8, Agenda C I)
Twelve documents re: Psalms and Hymn Section *Book of Praise*
- e. Synod 1977 – all copies of Outgoing Mail
- f. Synod 1980 (Acts Art. 8, Agenda 8 12)
Letter Watford re: "Apostles' Creed"
- g. Synod 1980 – all copies of Outgoing Mail
- h. Synod 1986 (Acts Art. 7, Agenda B5)
Letter D. Jansen re: Melody for Hymn 1
- i. Synod 1986 (Acts Art. 113)
Letter from the Australian Churches re: Greetings/Best Wishes

Note: Documents mentioned under (d) were forwarded to the Committee *Book of Praise* in August, 1975. An attempt was made to have them returned to the Archives.

2. "GENERAL" ARCHIVES

SYNODICAL DECISIONS

As suggested by its Advisory Committee, Synod 1958 declared that it is desirable to build up a *General Archive* containing:

- copies of the Acts of Classes East and West
- all correspondence and documents from Synodical Committees
- written specifics of the first period of our Church life in Canada
- other documents of more than local significance which are desirable for the General Archives
- all local Bulletins, Yearbooks, Pictures of Church buildings, etc.
(Translated and taken from the Acts Art. 207)

Synod 1962: "Synod feels it desirable to expand the general archives by requesting that all classes send their Acts or Minutes to the Church which attends to the archives, to which also the Churches are requested to send their bulletins once a year."

(Quoted from the Short Report Art. 13, Acts page 67)

Synod 1965: "Synod decides to express the desirability that the Churches remain co-operative, so that everything that is of importance for the history of the Churches be sent to the Church that is in charge of the Archives."

(Quoted from the Brief Report Art. 9, Acts page 59)

Synod 1974: "Synod decides to instruct the Church for the Archives to request archivists of Churches, Classes and/or Regional Synods for any documents it deems necessary to be kept in the General Archives."

(Quoted from the Acts, Art. 99)

CONTENTS

A. Acts or Minutes of:

Classes Canada East	September 1956
Classes Canada West	June 1954, June 1962, March 1963
Classes Ontario North	Classis Contracta August 1959
Classes Ontario South	December 1959, March 1960, June 1960, December 1960, September 1962, September 1965
Classes Alberta/Manitoba	November 1963, March 1964, November 1964, March 1965, June/July 1965, September 1965
Classes Pacific	April 1973, October 1976, May 1977, January 1978, October 1980, September 1981, October 1983, April 1986
Regional Synods Canada East	June 1960, September 1962, June 1964, September 1966, September 1968
Regional Synods Canada West	May 1964, October 1971, January 1972, May 1974, June 1982, April 1987

B. Documents Synodical Committees:

Committee – Contact with Churches Abroad, documents 1968-1974

Committee – Contact with the Christian Reformed Church, documents 1968-1974

Committee – *Book of Praise*, a few documents 1958-1972

Directors and Teachers for the Education to the Ministry in Eastern Canada, documents 1963-1965

C. Church Bulletins

Bulletins of some Churches covering a limited time period.

D. Some correspondence of post-war immigrants in preparation for Church Institutions.

E. Acta Generale Synode Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, Amersfoort-West 1966/1967.

F. Printed Reports to the Synod Kampen 1975

Herziening Kerkorde
Herziening Enige Gezangen
Werkwijze Synoden
Vrouwen Kiesrecht

G. Agenda Reformed Ecumenical Synod 1963

Note: A gift for the General Archives mentioned in the Acts of Synod 1962, Art. 89 has not materialized.

ANALYSIS

The results of 30 years of building up a *General* Archive are nothing to boast about; rather, the result points to a failure. The response to requests of Synods was nothing more than very poor and it is declining.

The reason for this probably lies for the most part with the Synods. The establishment of a General Archive did not come through a proposal from a Church or another Church assembly, but through more or less spontaneous suggestions made by an Advisory Committee of Synod 1958. The three Synods which have dealt with the General Archives seem to have hesitated in making firm decisions. They expressed the *desirability* of establishing such an archive for which they requested *co-operation* from all church assemblies. Generally speaking, this co-operation was never given.

With regard to maintaining "General" Archives, Acts and documents of Synods from 1977 and later reveal that only the documents pertaining to General Synod were inspected, with no attention being paid to other documents. It is remarkable that also the Synods in their replies to these reports were silent about "General" Archives. However, it seems that the idea of a "General" Archive was not completely written off, since the custom to appoint Churches to be in charge of and to inspect the "General" Archives was maintained.

The results of co-operation from all Church assemblies amounted to:

- Acts of only 25 Classical meetings and of 11 Regional Synods
- Some documents from Committees appointed by the Synod, but all from the period before 1974
- No documents at all about the first period of our Church life in Canada, and also no material of more than local significance desirable for the Archives
- Quite a number of local Church Bulletins but not from every Church and nothing of recent years, all stored together without order or system

If every Church sent their Bulletins, and if this would be useful for future reference, there should be indexes prepared of worthwhile articles and events. This would require more volunteer work.

All in all, the requested co-operation was very poor, is dwindling fast, and is at the present time near zero.

Finally, our Church Order does not require the setting up of a "General" Archive. Articles 36 and 43 speak of recording all things worthy of being recorded and of ensuring that proper care is taken of the Archives. That applies to each of the four

kinds of assemblies. But it does not include that the most major assembly should collect a second set of copies of what a minor assembly has already in its own Archives.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of a "General" Archive, as indicated by the Synods of 1958 and 1962, could not be realized due to lack of interest by all of the four kinds of Church assemblies.

Rectification of this situation is impossible since many of the required documents are not available any more.

It appears that the solution to clear up this situation is to give up the idea of establishing a "General" Archive.

In order to turn to an Archive of documents pertaining to General Synods only, I submit proposals to the General Synod of Winnipeg 1989 in addition to this report.

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PROPOSALS RE: ARCHIVES

to the General Synod Winnipeg 1989
of the Canadian Reformed Churches
January, 1989

Based on the Report on the General Archives of the Canadian Reformed Churches, I submit the following proposals:

That Synod decide:

1. to discontinue efforts to set up a General Archive as decided by the General Synod of 1958 and promoted by the Synods 1962, 1965, and 1974
2. to keep accurate records of all dealings of General Synods, and to ensure that proper care is taken of the Archives in agreement with article 36 and article 43 of the Church Order.

With regard to the documents collected for a "General" Archive, that Synod decide:

- A. to offer the four Classes and the two Regional Synods the documents pertaining to their assemblies, which are now in the "General" Archives
- B. to donate to the Library of the Theological College (or to store at the Library and in the care of the Library) what is listed in the Report under Contents of the General Archives: B, D, E, F, and G
- C. to donate the collected Church Bulletins to a paper drive for a worthwhile cause
- D. to instruct all Synodical Committees to forward their documents which are not needed anymore for their task to the Library of the Theological College
- E. to ask the Librarian of the Theological College to report to every General Synod on what has been received from Synodical Committees since their last Report to Synod.

Note: Documents of Synodical Committees fit very well with documents pertaining to General Synods. However, on the other hand, I have been assured that the staff of the Theological College would appreciate having these documents stored at the College since time and again they have a need for material that reveals preparation work done for Synodical decisions. Cataloging of the material could also be done by the Library staff in a more efficient way.

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