

# First Provisional Agenda – General Synod Edmonton 2019

- 1. OPENING ON BEHALF OF THE CONVENING CHURCH**
- 2. EXAMINATION OF THE CREDENTIALS**
- 3. ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS**
- 4. CONSTITUTION OF SYNOD**
- 5. INFORMATION FROM THE CONVENING CHURCH**
- 6. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**
- 7. SETTING OF TIME SCHEDULE**
- 8. INCOMING MAIL**
  - 8.1 GENERAL MATTERS
    - 8.1.1 *Letter from Regional Synod West dated November 9, 2018 – Delegates*
    - 8.1.2 *Letter from Regional Synod West dated November 14, 2018 – Nominations for board of Governors for the Theological Seminary*
    - 8.1.3 *Letter from Regional Synod east dated November 15, 2015 – Appointments and credentials for delegates to General Synod Edmonton*
  - 8.2 COMMITTEE REPORTS
    - 8.2.1 *Synod Guidelines Report*
    - 8.2.2 *Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)*
      - 8.2.2.1 *CRCA Subcommittee Netherlands – DGK*
      - 8.2.2.2 *CRCA Subcommittee Netherlands – GKN*
      - 8.2.2.3 *CRCA Subcommittee Netherlands – GKv*
    - 8.2.3 *Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA)*
    - 8.2.4 *Committee for Church Unity (CCU)*
      - 8.2.4.1 *CCU Subcommittee - Theological Education*
      - 8.2.4.2 *CCU Subcommittee - Church order*
    - 8.2.5 *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP)*
    - 8.2.6 *Inspection of Archives*
    - 8.2.7 *Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS)*
    - 8.2.8 *Committee for Pastoral Training Program (PTP)*
    - 8.2.9 *Report re: Days of Prayer – Churches at Burlington-Waterdown & Edmonton-Providence*
    - 8.2.10 *Committee for Bible Translation (CBT)*
    - 8.2.11 *Committee for the official Website*
    - 8.2.12 *Report on Needy Student Fund*
  - 8.3 LETTERS FROM THE CHURCHES REGARDING THE REPORTS
  - 8.4 OVERTURES
    - 8.4.1 *Overtures from Regional Synod West dated November 5*
      - 8.4.1.1 *Overture – Trinity Psalter – CPE Aldergrove*
      - 8.4.1.2 *Overture – Trinity Psalter – CM Denver*
      - 8.4.1.3 *Overture – Implementation of CO 21 – Licensure*
    - 8.4.2 *Overtures from Regional Synod East*
      - 8.4.2.1 *Overture – Seminary Student Licensure*
      - 8.4.2.2 *Overture – Lord Supper Form*

8.5 APPEALS

**9. APPOINTMENTS**

**10. CENSURE *AD* ARTICLE 34 CO**

**11. PUBLICATION OF THE ACTS**

**12. FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**13. PREPARATION FOR NEXT GENERAL SYNOD**

**14. ADOPTION OF THE ACTS**

**15. APPROVAL OF THE PRESS RELEASE**

**16. CLOSING**

1. Opening on behalf of the convening church
2. Examination of the credentials
3. Election of the officers
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Information from the convening church
6. Adoption of the agenda
7. Setting of time schedule
8. Incoming mail

## 8.1 General Matters

8.1.1 Letter from Regional Synod West dated November 9, 2018 – Delegates

November 9, 2018

Rev. Dr. R.C. (Karlo) Janssen  
7949 202a Street  
Langley, BC, V2Y 1W8  
Office: 604-854-4011  
e-mail: rcjanssen@shaw.ca

Re: RSW 2018 decision regarding delegates to GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel)

Esteemed brothers,

Please be informed of the following decision taken by Regional Synod West 2018. It means that you have been delegated as either a primary or alternate delegate to General Synod 2019, to be convened in Edmonton-Immanuel on Tuesday, May 14.

*ARTICLE 22 [8]: APPOINTMENTS*

...

*E. Delegates to GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel)*

*Ministers Primary: R.C. Janssen, A.J. Pol, J. Poppe, J.G. Slaa, J. Vanspronsen, W.M. Wielenga.*

*Alternates (in this order): J. Huijgen, S.C. VanDam, D. deBoer.*

*Elders Primary: J. DeHaas, K. Huttema, C. Leyenhorst, H. Moes, H. Schouten, B. Vane.*

*Alternates (in this order): C. Nienhuis, K. Vanderploeg, S. Raap.*

*Loss of wage claim for elders attending GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel) was set at a maximum of \$215 per day, maximum of \$1075 per week). Travel reimbursement was set 0.49 per km.*

The elders among you are informed that any financial claims made should be submitted to the treasurer of regional synod: br. J. Moedt ([john@moedt.ca](mailto:john@moedt.ca); [New] address: 2720 – 23 street, Coaldale AB).

As clerk of RSW 2018 undersigned will ensure the convening church of GS 2019 receives the credential, indicating who those delegated from RSW are. The convening church will be in touch with you regarding materials, lodging arrangements etc. in accordance with the guidelines (initially that would be the primary delegates and first alternate delegate). As I am to inform the convening church how to be in touch with you, please let me know what email address and what postal address to pass on.

May the Lord grant you wisdom as you prepare to serve in His Church as a delegate to GS 2019.

On behalf of Regional Synod West 2018,



Rev. Karlo Janssen  
Clerk at the time

8.1.2 Letter from Regional Synod West dated November 14, 2018 – Nominations for board of Governors for the Theological Seminary

November 14, 2018

Rev. Dr. R. C. (Karlo) Janssen  
7949 202a Street  
Langley, BC, V2Y 1W8  
Office: 604-854-4011  
e-mail: rcjanssen@shaw.ca

To: GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel)  
Re: Minister Nominations for Board of Governors

Esteemed brothers,

By means of this letter you are informed of the following actions and decisions of RSW 2018:

*Article 22 [8]: Appointments*

*The following appointments were made:*

...

*F. Nominated by acclamation for Board of Governors of the CRTS: Rev. R. Schouten as primary and Rev. D. deBoer as alternate. The names of the nominees will be forwarded to GS 2019 for consideration and appointment.*

May the Lord grant you wisdom in all your endeavours in service of His Kingdom.

On behalf of Regional Synod West 2018,



Rev. Karlo Janssen

Clerk at the time

8.1.3 Letter from Regional Synod east dated November 15, 2015 – Appointments and credentials for delegates to General Synod Edmonton

**Clarence Bouwman**  
324 Station Street,  
Box 837  
Smithville, ON, L0R 2A0  
Canada

15 November 2018

General Synod  
c/o Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton  
21112-35 Ave N.W.,  
Edmonton, AB,  
T6M 2P6

**CREDENTIALS TO GENERAL SYNOD  
MAY 2019**

Esteemed brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

With this letter I supply an extract from the Acts of Regional Synod East, November 2018 in relation to delegation to the General Synod planned for May 2019

- a. The following **elders** are appointed: brs John Jager, Bernie Kottelenberg, André Schutten, Fred Stoffels, Nick VandenOever, Art Witten; as alternates Allard Gunnink, Ron Bremer, Jeff Jans, Jonathan Reinink, John Witten & Harold Jonker (in that order)
- b. The following **ministers** are appointed: brs Douwe Agema, Clarence Bouwman, Peter Feenstra, Peter Holtvluwer, John Louwense, Clarence VanderVelde; as alternates Matthew vanLuik, Bill DeJong, Rodney Vermeulen, John vanWoudenberg, Theo Wierenga & Arend Witten (in that order)

These brothers are authorized to deal with and take part in all deliberations and transactions of General Synod regarding all matters legitimately appearing on its agenda. Regional Synod East trusts and expects that these men will participate in the proceedings in accordance with the requirements of the Word of God as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and the agreements contained in the adopted Church Order.

For Regional Synod East,

Clarence Bouwman,  
Clerk *at that time*

## 8.2 Committee Reports

8.2.1 Synod Guidelines Report

---

## Synod Guidelines – Report

### Mandate

GS 2016 (Art. 129) decided:

- 4.1 To mandate the officers of this Synod to take the necessary measures to have these suggestions acted upon.

“These suggestions” are the suggestions received from the GS 2016 Organizing Committee and a consideration by Synod in response to one of these suggestions. They are listed in the report that follows here.

### Changing Guidelines

GS 2016 (Art. 129) observed:

- [2.2] Synod Guideline J reads, “These Synodical Guidelines may be suspended, amended, revised or abrogated by a majority vote of Synod.”

Normally changes to Synod Guidelines are made by a synod as it comes to a close. GS 2016 failed to do so as a submission by the Dunnville CanRC – Synod Organizing Committee was almost overlooked. Hence GS 2016 last minute mandated the officers of synod to do what needed doing.

Hence GS 2016 did not formally make any changes to the Synod Guidelines. However, it did give leave to the officers of GS 2016 to submit advice to the convening church for GS 2019 on the matters raised by Dunnville.

We recommend that GS 2019 adopt whatever needs adopting with respect to Synod Guidelines, given the experience of the convening church for GS 2019 with the advice presented below.

### Filename

GS 2016 (Art 129):

- [2.1.1] “All electronically submitted documents to Synod should include a file name that makes it distinguishable e.g. The file name of the document should include the name of the submitting church and the topic of the submission. As an example a letter would have been easier to organize with a filename like Langley Letter to Synod 2016 re CWeb

**Rationale:** Many submitted documents simply name the topic which makes it difficult to properly file and organize especially when there are several churches submitting on the same topic.”

Experience indicates that not all those who submit something to a synod will stick to the guidelines. It makes more sense to allow the convening church to rename files appropriately. Our suggestion is that the convening church determine a system for file names that includes the following information: Provisional Agenda Item Number, Topic of document, Source of document, Date of document. Thus, for example, GS 2016 agenda item 8.3.2.2 might be called “8.3.2.2 – CCCNA Report – Carman-West CanRC – 160201”. And, for example, GS 2016 agenda item 8.6.7.2 might be called “8.6.7.2 – RSE 2015 appeal – A Sikkema – 160329”. We recommend to leave it in the freedom of the convening church how best to do this.

## 45 Submitting Hard Copies

46 GS 2016 (Art. 129):

47 [2.1.2] “We would discourage the use of spiral bound or comb bound paper copies of a  
48 submission.

49 **Rationale:** The five paper copies are placed in binders. Removing the sheets from  
50 a bound submission creates significant additional work. Duo-Tang or similar type  
51 paper folders made of cardstock paper or 3 ring binders are preferred.”

52 [2.1.3] “We recommend that if a submission is 15 pages or less no hard copy will be  
53 required.

54 **Rationale:** It is much easier and cost effective to print the hard copies from an  
55 email than to receive the documents, which often are folded papers, in an  
56 envelope. Subsequently trying to insert folded papers into a binder is cumbersome  
57 and unwieldy.”

58 [3.3] It is not clear why hard copies are needed, other than for archiving purposes.  
59 Hence it makes little sense to set a limit on the size of submissions as they would  
60 not require printing beforehand.

61 As consideration 3.3 suggests, there is actually no need to create a printed version of the  
62 submissions. At GS 2016, 5 copies were printed, encompassing two 3” binders. Of the five, only  
63 two were actually used by synod members (and one because his laptop had crashed). Both those  
64 binders were left behind. It would seem that all that is needed is one hard copy for archival  
65 purposes.

66 We therefore suggest that printed copies only be made upon request by individual synod  
67 delegates. When the time for archiving comes, a hard copy of all materials would be prepared for  
68 submission to the Archiving Church.

69

70 This requires a change to Synod Guidelines I.E. It currently reads:

71 E. All material for Synod should be received by the convening Church (in digital format,  
72 and five paper copies) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of General  
73 Synod. Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda  
74 unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.

75 We recommend that the phrase “and five paper copies” be removed so that I.E. read:

76 E. All material for Synod should be received by the convening Church (in digital format)  
77 no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of General Synod. Material  
78 received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless Synod is  
79 satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.

80 The same deletion would have to occur in Guideline I.A.:

81 A. The convening Church shall set the date on which Synod shall meet (cf. Art. 49, CO). The  
82 convening church shall publish the date along with the rule:

83 All material for Synod should be received by the convening Church (in digital  
84 format, ~~and five paper copies~~) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date  
85 of General Synod. Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to  
86 the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are  
87 reasonable.

88

89

## 90 Submitting Digital Copies

91 GS 2016 (Art. 129):

92 [2.1.5] “All scanned submissions should be in .pdf, .doc. or .docx. file format.

93 **Rationale:** Some scanned copies were in formats that needed to be converted from  
94 photo and other picture formats. This creates extra unnecessary work.”

95 [2.1.6] “Proper electronic signatures will be accepted as a suitable means of verifying the  
96 authenticity of a submission.

97 **Rationale:** A proper electronic signature created with a trustworthy software  
98 program designed with the capabilities to create a verifiable signature will  
99 diminish the need for scanned copies.”

100 The digital world constantly changes. Your committee sought and received advise from br. G.  
101 Bos. Br. Bos was a member of GS 2016 and thus knows synod’s needs. By profession, he works  
102 at IT security at the University of Guelph, and thus he is well placed to comment on these  
103 matters.

104 With regard to 2.1.5 he suggested to limit it to PDF. These submissions should not be picture  
105 PDF but text PDF. The convening church can ask a church submitting a picture PDF to submit a  
106 text PDF.

107 With regard to 2.1.6 he suggests that this is not practicable. Proper electronic signatures require  
108 software, which most will not have. It is also not as secure, he figures, as it could be. Br. Bos  
109 suggests further this level of security is not necessary in our church community. There are other  
110 ways to verify whether a letter is authentic or fraudulent. Simply checking the email address via  
111 which something is submitted is already sufficient in most cases.

112 We recommend that the convening church ensure all agenda items for a synod are in text PDF  
113 format. We further recommend that the convening church and synod decide for themselves how  
114 to verify the authenticity of a submission.

115

## 116 Separate Submissions for Separate Topics

117 GS 2016 (Art. 129):

118 [2.1.4] “If submissions are scanned copies it is highly recommended that submissions  
119 dealing with separate topics be scanned as separate documents.

120 **Rationale:** To separate topics that have all been lumped into one scan creates extra  
121 unnecessary work.”

122 [2.1.7] “If at all possible and feasible submitters should stick to one topic in each of their  
123 submissions.

124 **Rationale:** We received submissions that covered more than one topic making it  
125 difficult to file and find an appropriate placement on the agenda.”

126 Regarding 2.1.4, it indeed makes sense for the convening church to request that individual  
127 submissions be sent as separate files. If a file contains more than one submission, the convening  
128 church may divide the material itself or request that the material be divided by whoever  
129 submitted it.

130 Regarding 2.1.7, this is common sense. The challenge is, though, that the convening church  
131 and/or synod determines what forms an individual topic. Moreover, one could argue that letters  
132 in relation to a Committee Report (e.g. CCCNA) cover more than one topic. While the  
133 convening church can request that submissions deal as much as possible with one topic, the  
134 convening church will still need to check the contents of a letter to see whether it covers more  
135 than one topic.

136  
137  
138  
139  
140  
141  
142  
143  
144  
145  
146  
147  
148  
149  
150  
151  
152  
153  
154  
155  
156  
157  
158  
159

---

## **General**

In the end, the suggestions coming from Dunnville actually only require one minor change to the Guidelines. Everything else concerns matters a convening church could itself decide. The issue seems to have been that Dunnville was unsure how far it could go beyond the Guidelines. This being so, we recommend the following addition to Guideline I.A.

The convening church is free to undertake whatever measures are needed to improve the operations of a synod. Such measures include, but are not limited to, standardizing file formats to text PDF; standardizing file names to include the agenda item number, the topic, the source, and the date; verifying the authenticity of submissions.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

1. To remove the phrase “, and five paper copies” from Guidelines I.A and I.E.
2. To add to the end of Guideline I.A: “The convening church is free to undertake whatever measures are needed to improve the operations of a synod. Such measures include, but are not limited to, standardizing file formats to text PDF; standardizing file names to include the agenda item number, the topic, the source, and the date; verifying the authenticity of submissions.”

Submitted August 2018,  
R. Aasman, R. Schouten, R.C. Janssen, E. Kampen.

## 8.2.2 Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)

# Committee for Relations on Churches Abroad Report to GS 2019

## INTRODUCTION

Mission is one way in which the church finds itself interacting with those outside its structures. The focus of mission is on those not converted. Inter-church relations is another way in which the church finds itself interacting with those outside its structures. The focus of inter-church relations is to encourage and admonish one another and maintain and promote the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3).

We respectfully present to you the report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA), covering the period since GS 2016 (Dunnville).

Reports on Churches Abroad usually tend to be long and, filled with acronyms and abbreviations, can be difficult to read. We tried to address this reality by submitting most of our report in two formats. Our report thus consists of the following three sections:

Section 1 – a reader-friendly version of our activities, which briefly summarizes the relevant data along with our recommendations. We begin with general matters pertaining to the operations of the CRCA, and then describe the execution of specific GS 2016 mandates regarding church federations and the ICRC.

Section 2 – a more technical and detailed version of each topic covered in the first section.

Section 3 – this introduces general matters involving inter-church relations; it is being submitted by the CRCA and CCCNA together.

In the digital version (PDF) of the report, the tags can be used to move around in the report.

A list of acronyms and abbreviations used in this report can be found at the end of the report.

## ***CURRENT RULES FOR ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP (EF)<sup>1</sup>***

For the sake of completeness and ease of reference we reproduce the current rules for EF:

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

---

<sup>1</sup> GS 1992 Art. 50. Republished as Appendix 31 in GS 2016 Acts.

## SECTION 1 – READER-FRIENDLY VERSION OF CRCA REPORTS

Section 1 of our report presents, what we hope will be, an easier-to-read summary of our full-length report. Should the reader seek more details regarding a matter, or the formal text of our advice and recommendations, the reader is pointed to Section 2.

### **PART 1: GENERAL**

GS 2016 appointed the following six brothers to the CRCA: Rev. Dr. R.C. Janssen (convenor), Rev. S.C. VanDam, Rev. A. Witten, Br. O. Bouwman, Br. J. VanLaar, and Br. H. Schouten. This year Br. J. VanLaar is to retire, having served 3 consecutive terms on the committee. If the CRCA becomes responsible again for relationships with The Netherlands, the CRCA is seeking to expand to 7 members, and thus is looking for the appointment of two new members.

During the 2.5 years since GS 2016, the CRCA has met 10 times. As only 4 of the 6 CRCA members reside in the Fraser Valley, thankful use was made of video conferencing for meetings.

Beginning with preparations for the ICRC 2017, the CRCA has maintained contact with the three other CanRC inter-church relations committees (the CCCNA, the CRCA-SRN, and the CCU). The CRCA has shared its minutes, once adopted and signed, with these other committees. The CRCA and CCCNA are submitting a combined report with regards to a matter that concerns us both. The CRCA-SRN declined to participate in this as it anticipates being dissolved by GS 2019. The CCU has also not participated.

In a sense the CRCA is the “face” of the CanRC to the outside world. As such we receive communications of various sorts from churches abroad. We do not report on every contact we’ve had but considered it appropriate to report on our contact with churches in Germany and in Eastern Europe (Hungary and surroundings). The CRCA understands it currently does not have the authorization to work with such contacts. As this is puzzling to churches abroad, the CRCA is recommending that it be given some room to bring such a contact to the attention of the churches.

Practising inter-church relations globally requires finances. Our total costs for the 2.5 years in executing the decisions of GS 2016 comes to \$36,313.85.

Finally, it is helpful for the CRCA to know what lives in the churches. This is often expressed in letters submitted to synod by local churches in response to a CRCA report. At this point in time the CRCA does not receive access to this correspondence. The CRCA requests that it be given this access, unless a synod determines a submission should not be seen by the CRCA.

**PART 2: RELATIONSHIPS**

**Australia (FRCA)**

**Introduction**

The CanRC entered into EF with the Free Reformed Church of Australia (FRCA) by a decision of GS 1958 (art. 95).

**Brief description of Free Reformed Church of Australia**

Source of church data: Yearbook 2017 and website of the FRCA

Location	<i>Australia with the largest concentration in Western Australia.</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Mostly GK(v) immigrants after World War II</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>16 churches &amp; 1 home congregation</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>4950 members of whom 2500 are communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Triennially</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	<a href="http://frca.org.au/">http://frca.org.au/</a>		

**History of the relationship**

Since this relationship began in 1958 there has been a high level of cooperation. The FRCA have used the CanRC *Book of Praise* and sent students to CRTS. The CanRC have cooperated with the FRCA in mission work, calling each other’s ministers, and consulted about 3<sup>rd</sup> party ecclesiastical relationships. This cooperation remains important as our federations mature, and the FRCA is exploring the establishment of an Australian Theological Seminary, the publication of an Australian *Book of Praise*, and exploring relationships with other English-speaking church federations.

**Summary of the report**

The CRCA is **recommending** that EF with the FRCA be continued and that your committee be mandated to visit with the FRCA in the inter-synodical period. We are also recommending that the various deputyships of the FRCA be invited to have direct contact with the corresponding CanRC committees, in particular that they be invited to request the help of the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* in the publication of an Australian *Book of Praise*. We are recommending that Synod encourage the board of governors and the senate of CRTS to continue to explore with the FRCA the possibilities for long distance theological education from Australia.

**Brazil (IRB)**

**Introduction**

The CanRC entered into EF with the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) by a decision of GS 2001 (Art. 55).

**Brief description of the IRB**

Location	<i>Various areas of Brazil with a concentration in the North East</i>		
Origins	<i>Mostly through the mission work of the CanRC Churches of first Surrey and then Hamilton. Also through the work of the Dutch Churches in the South and a Dutch colony in Unai.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds &amp; Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & Church plants	<i>17 congregations (8 are instituted Churches)</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>892 members of which 550 are communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Biannually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>John Calvin Institute (IJC)</i>		
Website	<a href="http://www.igrejasreformadasdobrasil.org">www.igrejasreformadasdobrasil.org</a>		

**History of the relationship**

At all General Synods subsequent to GS 2001 the committee for contact with the IRB was mandated to continue the relationship of EF with the IRB under the adopted rules and to use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to these churches.

**Summary of the report**

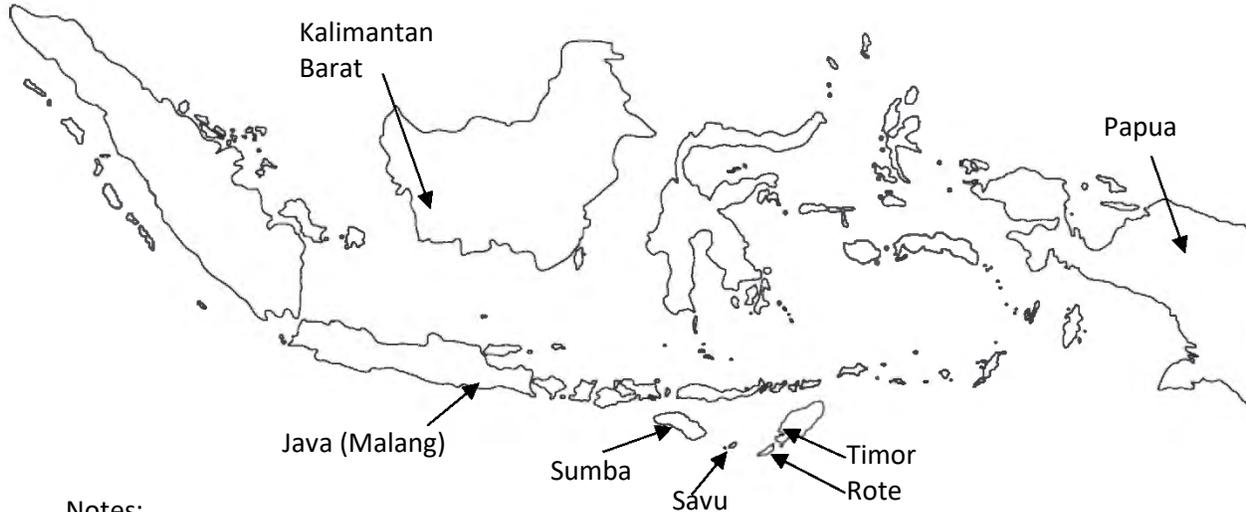
The CanRC has full EF with the IRB and so the relationship is similar to, for example, the relationship the CanRC has with the FRCA. Yet, the IRB looks to the CanRC as a big sister and very much appreciates the assistance that is given to them in many ways.

The CRCA is **recommending** that EF with the IRB be continued and further that your committee be mandated to visit with IRB between now and our next synod to continue to encourage this young federation of churches.

## Indonesia (GGRI, GGRC)

To avoid repetition, the reports on CanRC relationships and contacts in Indonesia have been combined. Nevertheless, the CRCA recommends that decisions concerning churches in Indonesia be taken per church or matter.

### Indonesia: Maps



#### Notes:

Sumba, Savu, Rote, and Timor are all in the province Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT)

Traveling from Sumba to Timor is about a day on a ferry or an hour by plane. Savu is generally only reached by ferry. Road infrastructure is minimal: on a sealed road one could average 40km per hour. Many roads are unsealed and in the wet season often impassable.

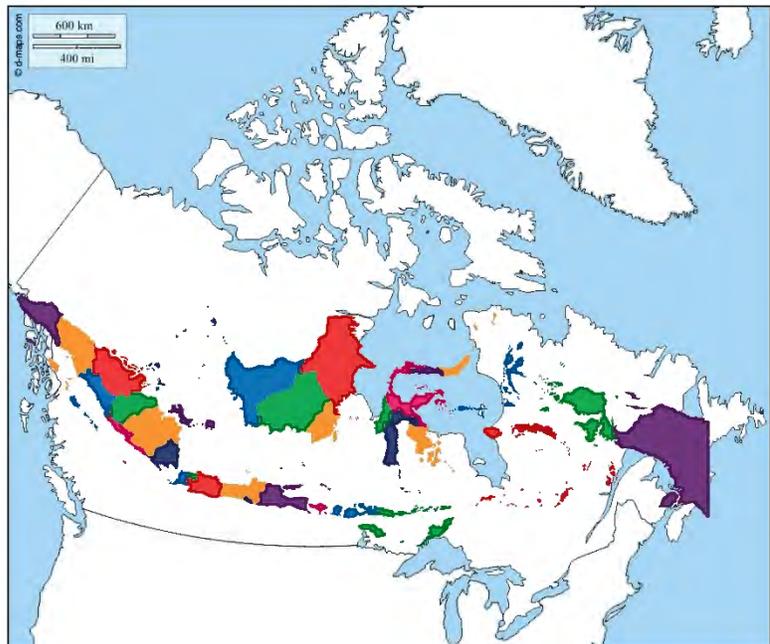
Indonesia is not only a country of great distances, it is also a nation of many peoples. The total population is over 260 million people. Smaller islands have their own ethnicity and culture, larger islands have many ethnicities and cultures, and large cities (like Kupang, population approaching 500.000) tend to be multi-ethnic.

The **GGRI** are in Papua, NTT (Sumba, Savu, and Timor), and Kalimantan Barat.

The **GGRC** are in NTT (Savu, Timor, Rote, and Java).

The **GGRI-Timor** are in Timor.

*Indonesia and Canada compared for size.*



**GGRI: Introduction**

The CanRC entered into EF with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – NTT province GGRI-NTT by a decision of GS 2010 (art. 108).

**Brief description of GGRI**

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Indonesia, in the provinces West Kalimantan (Kalimantan Barat = KB), East Nusa Tenggara (Nusa Tenggara Timur = NTT), and Papua</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Mission by the GKN (pre WW2) and GKv in KB and Sumba (NTT), and by the GKN (pre WW2), GKv, and CanRC Papua. The three GGRI groups had been conferencing since 1978, they formally became a single federation of churches in 2012</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds &amp; Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Polity	<i>Church Order of Dort (adapted to Indonesian context)</i>		
Number of churches & church plants <sup>2</sup>	<i>KB: 35 total NTT: 20 churches + 55 mission posts Papua: 50 churches + 40 mission posts</i>		
Membership numbers <sup>1</sup>	<i>KB: ~6000 members NTT: ~7000 members Papua: ~16,500 members</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>		<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>KB NTT: 4 P: 3</i>	<i>Varies</i>
	<i>Regional Synod</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Triennially</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Quadrennially</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>STT on Sumba Island and STT in Kalimantan Barat province</i>		
Website	<i>None</i>		

**History of the relationship**

For various reasons, including language barriers and not being able to gauge ecclesiastical struggles, the CanRC decided in 1958 and 1962 not to have correspondence with churches in Indonesia.

(Re)Acquaintance with the GGRI-NTT came about initially through the ICRC; both the CanRC and GGRI-NTT were represented at the Constituent Assembly in 1982. The question of a relationship with the GGRI was raised in a supplementary report to GS 2004, primarily as the GGRI-NTT had EF with the FRCA and GKv, as the GGRI-NTT was in contact with the GGRC, and as the Smithville CanRC had a mission field in Timor, where the GGRI-NTT also has a congregation. One of the ministers in the GGRI-NTT is a graduate of the CRTS; he is currently a teacher at the GGRI seminary in Sumba Island. In 2010 EF was entered into.

Since entering into EF the CanRC has visited the GGRI-NTT frequently. Lack of funds has meant the GGRI-NTT have not been to our synods. For many years the GGRI-NTT, the GGRI-KB, and the GGRI-Papua<sup>3</sup> had been meeting in conferences; in 2012 the conference was formalized to a synod, thus implying the formation of the GGRI-*nasional*. At first because the GGRI-KB and GGRI-Papua were not known to the CanRC, and then because concerns were expressed, GS 2013 and GS 2016 mandated the CRCA to investigate whether EF should be extended to the GGRI as a whole.

**Summary of the report**

*Preliminary note: CanRC relationships with Indonesian churches are a very complex matter. In our attempt to summarize matters, we recognize clarity may have been lost. If you as reader find yourself confused, please turn to the parallel full-length report in Section 2.*

<sup>2</sup> Attempts to update information failed; what follows was presented to GS 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Not to be confused with the GGRP.

1 The relationship with the GGRI & GGRI-NTT has been a hearty one. Communicating is complicated but  
2 not an insurmountable issue, as the GGRI have members who speak English sufficiently and the CanRC have  
3 members who speak Indonesian sufficiently.

4 The CRCA has maintained communication with the Smithville CanRC regarding relationships in Indonesia.  
5 In the fall of 2016 two delegates, Rev. R.C. Janssen and br. O. Bouwman, attended the GGRI general synod  
6 and, in the week following, the GGRI-NTT provincial synod. During the ICRC the CRCA hosted a meeting at  
7 which were present: in person, delegates from the GGRC, GGRI, CanRC, URCNA, GKv, Smithville CanRC  
8 (Timor Mission Board), and, via Skype, the FRCA.

9 At the ICRC the GGRI-NTT membership was extended, at the request of the GGRI, to cover the GGRI as  
10 a whole. Both the GKv and the FRCA consider the GGRI as a whole their sister church. The URCNA is  
11 considering establishing EF with the GGRI. At the synod of the GGRI-*nasional* we observed how the four-  
12 member delegation of the GGRC were treated in many ways as if they were delegates from a fourth regional  
13 synod. There were no delegates from what are now the GGRI-Timor at either the national or provincial  
14 synod we attended. Our impression has been that the GGRI-*nasional* functions more as a federation of  
15 church federations, in many ways paralleling the political constitution and operation of the nation  
16 Indonesia.<sup>4</sup>

17 The CRCA has seen no evidence to confirm the concerns expressed to GS 2016 regarding the GGRI-KB or  
18 the GGRI-Papua. At the synod of the GGRI-*nasional* it was clear that the GGRI-KB does not compromise the  
19 Reformed faith. The polity practiced by the GGRI-Papua is understandable in its political context.

20 Your committee is **recommending** that synod decide that EF with the GGRI be considered to extend to  
21 the GGRI as a whole and that it be continued. Further, we recommend that your committee be mandated  
22 to monitor developments within the GGRI. This should continue to be done in close consultation with our  
23 sister churches who have EF with the GGRI (especially the FRCA), with the Smithville CanRC, and by sending  
24 a delegation to the quadrennial synod of the GGRI, planned for 2020 in Kalimantan Barat.

---

<sup>4</sup> While Indonesia may be a nation, it comprises many ethnicities and cultures.

**GGRC: Introduction**

Following a request from what is now known as the GGRC, the CRCA was mandated to investigate EF with the GGRC by GS 2001 (art. 54).

**Brief description of GGRC as in 2018**

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Indonesia: islands of Timor, Savu, Rote, and Java</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Left the GMIT (“Dutch” Reformed Church – NHK mission church), became GMM, then GGMM, then GGRM, then a majority became GGRC. Went through a period of being somewhat charismatic (as GMM and GGMM), until Rev. Fangidae connected with GKv missionary Rev. Klamer, and then had future GGRM ministers educated in Sumba. Subsequently, Rev. Knigge worked with the GGRM for some 6 years.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds &amp; Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Polity	<i>Church Order of Dort</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>14 &amp; 4</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>Estimated: 2000</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/council</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>Weekly</i>
	<i>Neighbouring churches</i>		<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2x per year</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Triannual</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>In the past: STAKRI (Timor), John Calvin (Bali), Malang (Java), and STT-Sumba; Currently: Malang</i>		
Website	<i>None</i>		

**History of the relationship**

CanRC connections with the GGRC – at that time known as the GGRM or Reformed Pilgrim Churches – began during the 1990s when br. Yonson Dethan studied at CRTS. Following his graduation in 1997 he returned to Indonesia to serve as a minister in the GGRM. In early 2001 the GGRM requested a “contact relationship” with the CanRC. GS 2001 (art. 54) mandated the CRCA to investigate entering into EF with the GGRC. Roughly a third of the current GGRC ministers have been students of Rev. Dr. Andrew Pol when he taught in Sumba.

In the course of 15 years the CanRC did not decide to enter into EF as there continually were concerns and unknowns regarding the GGRC. These related first to a schism within the churches, which led to the existence of a GGRM and a GGRC. This matter was sufficiently resolved in 2012. Subsequent to this, concerns arose about the practice of church polity within the GGRC.

Developing a relationship with the GGRC has also been impacted by the fact that in 2003 the Smithville CanRC opened a mission field in Timor, settling its missionary in Kupang. Subsequently a Theological Seminary and Teachers’ College (STAKRI) was established there. Kupang is where the GGRC currently have several churches and STAKRI is within a few miles of where the GGRC operate a K-12 school (Children of Light). The intention of the Smithville CanRC had been that any churches formed out of its mission work would join the GGRC. The GGRC were informed of this in letters written in 2003, 2004, and confirmed again in 2012. However, much to the frustration of the GGRC, this has not happened. Rather, in the fall of 2016 the 9 churches born out of Smithville’s mission work federated as the GGRI-Timor. In a letter dated April 9, 2018, the Smithville CanRC council informed the CRCA of this. The letter noted: “Despite Smithville’s encouragement and hope that the mission churches would have joined themselves to the GGRC, this did not occur.” Within the GGRI-Timor the impression exists that the GGRC has a tendency to hierarchy and “strong men”; thus, it is not appealing for those who are now in the GGRI-Timor, former members of a liberal church with hierarchy and “strong men”, to join the GGRC. On August 4, 2018, the CRCA was informed by the Timor Mission Board that the GGRI-Timor is seeking to join the GGRI-*nasional*.

1 A further complication has been the fact that what is now the GGRI-Timor operates a theological  
2 seminary in Timor, known as STAKRI. The experience of GGRC as churches, and of GGRC members, with  
3 STAKRI has not been positive.

4 Finally, the GGRC feel that there is much misunderstanding regarding their internal operations as a  
5 federation of churches. This has been compounded by unverified rumours that damage the honour and  
6 reputation of the GGRC and of its office bearers and assemblies.

7 The GGRC are deeply grieved by the fact that there is still no EF between the CanRC and GGRC. The GGRI-  
8 NTT requested EF after the GGRC did and have been received into EF already in 2010. The GGRC initially  
9 cooperated with Mission Timor, understanding that they were building their own churches; currently  
10 communication between the GGRC and GGRI-Timor is minimal. The GGRC is a member of the ICRC. The  
11 GGRC has entered into EF with the URCNA in 2016 and is actively encouraging and facilitating EF between  
12 the GGRI and URCNA.

### 13 Summary of the report

14 *Preliminary note: CanRC relationships with Indonesian churches are a very complex matter. In*  
15 *our attempt to summarize matters, we recognize clarity may have been lost. If you as reader find*  
16 *yourself confused, please turn to the parallel full-length report in Section 2.*

17 Contact with the GGRC has been hearty and frank. Communicating is complicated but not an  
18 insurmountable issue, as the GGRC have members who speak English fairly fluently and the CRCA received  
19 assistance, when needed, from CanRC members fluent in Indonesian.

20 Throughout its contact with the GGRC the CRCA has maintained communication with the Smithville  
21 CanRC regarding relationships in Indonesia. During a visit to Sumba in 2016 by Rev. R.C. Janssen and br. O.  
22 Bouwman, a meeting took place with four delegates of the GGRC. During the ICRC in 2017 the CRCA hosted  
23 a meeting at which were present: in person, delegates from the GGRC, GGRI, CanRC, URCNA, GKv, Smithville  
24 CanRC (Timor Mission Board), and, via Skype, the FRCA. In August of 2018 Rev. R.C. Janssen visited the GGRC  
25 for a week. He met with various parties and observed the operations of the GGRC first hand. He preached  
26 and taught at two GGRC classes, preached in two local GGRC, and presented a guest lecture at STAKRI.

27 The CRCA has paid special attention to the matters of hierarchy and “strong men”. As far as the CRCA  
28 could observe – in discussions, during ecclesiastical assemblies, and during less formal occasions – the GGRC  
29 practice mutual accountability between churches and between office bearers. Where their practice might  
30 be considered weak, the GGRC were receptive to advice. It is the desire of the GGRC to seek unity with all  
31 who are like-minded in faith and practice. They eagerly seek assistance in strengthening their Reformed  
32 identity and reaching out to the unreached around them.

33 The GGRC find it remarkable that the CanRC promote the use of STAKRI as the institute for theological  
34 training. Their involvement is currently limited to one of their ministers teaching church polity at STAKRI.

35 Your committee is **recommending** that synod decide to enter into EF with the GGRC. Further, we  
36 recommend that your committee be mandated to monitor developments within the GGRC. This should  
37 continue to be done in close consultation with our sister churches who have EF with the GGRC (especially  
38 the FRCA and URCNA), with the Smithville CanRC, and by sending a delegation to the next synod of the  
39 GGRC, planned for 2019 in Korlok, Rote Island.

40

1 **Other matters pertaining to Indonesia: Summary of the report**

2 In 2003 the Smithville CanRC opened a mission field on Timor Island, sending out Rev. Ed Dethan. In 2003  
3 and 2004, and again in 2012, Smithville indicated to the GGRC that the intention was that any churches that  
4 should be established through this work would join the GGRC. The work of Timor Mission is in part in very  
5 close proximity to where the GGRC are. Initially there was close cooperation between the GGRC and Timor  
6 Mission. However, over time this cooperation has dwindled. In 2016 the 9 churches that have been  
7 established through Mission Timor federated into the GGRI-Timor. Rather than seek affiliation with the  
8 GGRC, the GGRI-Timor has indicated it will seek affiliation with the GGRI-*nasional*.

9 There is only one GGRI-NTT in Timor, where the GGRI-Timor are located. This local congregation appears  
10 to be on good terms with all other parties. However, the distance between most of the GGRI-NTT and the  
11 GGRI-Timor (Sumba: an hour flying or a day on a ferry), Savu: at least half a day on a ferry) means that pulpit  
12 exchange is costly and time consuming.

13 The CRCA has been asked by the Smithville CanRC to investigate EF with the GGRI-Timor. Given more  
14 recent decisions by synods on inter-church relations, the CRCA is not sure whether it can do so without a  
15 specific mandate from synod. We are asking synod to consider this and **recommend** that, if appropriate,  
16 the CRCA be given a mandate to investigate EF with the GGRI-Timor.

17 One of the projects involved with Mission Timor is STAKRI, a post-secondary school that functions as a  
18 teacher's college and theological seminary. The CRCA was mandated by GS 2016 to encourage cooperation  
19 with and use of STAKRI by the GGRI-NTT and GGRC. Since then, the GGRI-NTT and the GGRC, as well as the  
20 FRCA, expressed concerns about the operations of STAKRI specifically in providing what was promised. We  
21 directed them with their concerns to the board of STAKRI and to the Smithville CanRC, being under the  
22 impression that STAKRI was under Smithville's oversight. However, STAKRI operates under GGRI-Timor  
23 supervision. In 2018 the GGRC indicated that their concerns continue to persist. At present, GGRC  
24 involvement with STAKRI is limited to one GGRC minister teaching at STAKRI. The concerns of the GGRI-NTT  
25 and FRCA have been resolved.

26 The concerns expressed by other parties with respect to STAKRI led the CRCA to reflect on why it has a  
27 mandate to encourage cooperation with and use of STAKRI. Seminary training is not a matter covered by  
28 our Rules for EF. The CRCA believes how or where ministers-to-be are trained is a "minor point of church  
29 order or practice" (CO article 50). Rather, the focus of the CRCA should be on practices to ensure the pure  
30 preaching of the Gospel. In that regard, both the GGRI-NTT and GGRC have the practice of colloquiums and  
31 ecclesiastical examinations. These are not identical to CanRC practices but do fit within the range of  
32 churches that practice Dort polity, among them our sister churches (e.g. URCNA).

33 Thus we **recommend** that synod no longer mandate the CRCA specifically to encourage cooperation with  
34 or use of STAKRI.

35  
36

**Korea (KPCK, RCK, IRCK)**

**KPCK: Introduction**

The CanRC entered into EF with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK) by a decision of GS 1992 (Art. 111).

**Brief description of KPCK**

Location	<i>South Korea</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Established in 1952, separating from the Presbyterian Church of Korea</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>2000</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>472,014</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Sessions (each local church)</i>		<i>Not known</i>
	<i>Presbyteries</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>Not known</i>
	<i>General Assembly</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Korea Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	<a href="http://www.kosin.org/kosin/htmls/pck.htm">http://www.kosin.org/kosin/htmls/pck.htm</a>		

**History of the relationship**

For many years (from 1968 onwards), the CanRC was aware of the KPCK and maintained some level of contact but due to language and communication difficulties was unable to establish EF. This changed with the arrival of Dr. N.H. Gootjes to the CRTS from South Korea. Being familiar with the Korean language and ecclesiastical context, he was able to facilitate a better understanding of the KPCK by the CanRC and so EF was established in 1992.

GS 2007 decided to reach out to the GKv and FRCA to alternate visiting the KPCK GA every three years and share reports. This cooperation has worked effectively.

In 2017, Rev. S.C. Van Dam could be accompanied by Jerome Lee (a Korean native and KPCK ordained minister currently serving as an elder in the CanRC at Surrey, BC). This greatly helped with improving communication and understanding.

**Summary of the report**

Over the years, there have regularly been questions from the churches as to the usefulness of having EF with Korean churches. The difference in language and culture is significant and natural interaction is minimal. Yet it is good to maintain EF with the KPCK. They are one of the largest biblically faithful Presbyterian federations in South Korea. Historically they also have close ties with our Dutch “mother”, the GKv. From our interaction with them it became clear once again that they are a faithful church of Jesus Christ. Having EF with them also puts us in a position to be able to give our feedback regarding the decisions of the GKv. This is something that they are struggling with as a federation of churches, as some ministers are inclined to consider the recent Dutch decision regarding women in office as worthy of investigation. It was beneficial to be able to encourage them to remain faithful to the Word of God and this was well received.

Your committee is **recommending** that EF with the KPCK be maintained and further that your committee be mandated to visit the General Assembly of the KPCK in 2020 (as per the agreement with the GKv and FRCA). We also recommend that their response to the GKv decision regarding women in office be monitored.

1 **IRCK: Introduction**

2 The CanRC have had some level of contact with the IRCK since 2007.

3 **Brief description of IRCK**

Location	<i>South Korea</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Established in 1964, separating from the Presbyterian Church in Korea (not Kosin)</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>4</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>700</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency (Episcopalian form of church government)	<i>Consistories</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Not known</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Theological Academy</i>		
Website	<a href="http://www.irc.or.kr">www.irc.or.kr</a>		

4 **History of the relationship**

5 In 2007, the CanRC decided not to enter into EF with the IRCK due to a lack of information about the  
6 IRCK. In the following years, the CanRC discussed with the KPCK its relationship with the IRCK in order to  
7 gain more information about the IRCK. In 2013, GS mandated the committee to encourage the IRCK to seek  
8 contact with the KPCK and the RCK. This mandate was changed in 2016 to continue having contact with the  
9 IRCK.

10 **Summary of the report**

11 The IRCK are no longer seeking EF with the CanRC due to a shortage of man power from their side. They  
12 value the contact which they may have with the CanRC as is evident from their inviting CanRC ministers and  
13 professors to give lectures at their Theological Academy and from their publishing Korean translations of  
14 Reformed books by CanRC authors.

15 Your committee is **recommending** that formal contact with the IRCK be discontinued.

16

1 **RCK: Introduction**

2 The CanRC were approached by the RCK to have EF with the RCK in 2009.

3 **Brief description of RCK**

Location	<i>South Korea</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Established in 2008, mainly from the KPCK</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>2</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>Under 200</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency (Episcopalian form of church government)	<i>Consistories</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Not known</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>		
Training of Theological Students	<i>N/a</i>		
Website	<i>N/a</i>		

4 **History of the relationship**

5 The CanRC were approached by the RCK to have EF with the RCK in 2009. The RCK originates mainly from  
6 difficulties with the KPCK. Since the CanRC have EF with the KPCK, the CanRC have always encouraged both  
7 the RCK and KPCK to work out their differences and be reconciled.

8 **Summary of the report**

9 There has been no reconciliation between the KPCK and the RCK. In 2015, the congregation led by Rev.  
10 Dong Sup Song was suspended from the federation. Since 2008, six congregations have left the federation,  
11 leaving only two remaining. The reasons for this significant decrease are unclear. A graduate of the CRTS  
12 (Sungwoon Yoon) has accepted a call to a RCK congregation (Gwangju Reformed Church).

13 Your committee is **recommending** that formal contact with the RCK be discontinued.

14

## ***New Zealand (RCNZ)***

### **Introduction**

The CanRC entered into EF with the Reformed Churches in New Zealand by a decision of GS 2007 (art. 66).

### **Brief description of the RCNZ**

Source of church data: Yearbook of the RCNZ 2018

Location	<i>On the North and South Islands of New Zealand</i>		
Origin	<i>New Zealanders and Post World War 2 European immigrants from various Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian federations.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity Westminster Confession</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>21 churches</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>3,274 members</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency (Dort polity with some Westminster terminology)	<i>Sessions</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Presbyteries</i>	<i>3</i>	
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Triennially</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>The RCNZ presently makes use of the Reformed Theological Seminary in Melbourne Australia, and Mid America Reformed Theological Seminary, and Greenville Theological Seminary.</i>		
Website	<a href="http://www.rcnz.org.nz">www.rcnz.org.nz</a>		

### **History of the relationship**

The CanRC has enjoyed fruitful cooperation with the RCNZ in the work of mission in Papua New Guinea. Some CanRC ministers have served for periods in vacant RCNZ churches. The RCNZ have been invited to make use of the CRTS. The CanRC has encouraged the ecclesiastical relationship between the RCNZ and our sister church in the region, the FRCA, and monitored the changes in their relationship with the CRC Australia.

### **Summary of the report**

The RCNZ continues as a true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ. This sister church relationship has been mutually beneficial. The CRCA is **recommending** that EF with the RCNZ be continued and your committee be mandated to visit with the RCNZ in the inter-synodical period.

**Scotland (FCS, FCC)**

**FCS: Introduction**

The CanRC entered into EF with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) by a decision of GS 1992 (art. 128).

**Brief description of FCS**

Location	<i>Mainly Scotland, also London, England and Prince Edward Island, Canada</i>		
Origin	<i>Disruption of 1843, separation from the Church of Scotland</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>100 churches</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>8,615 members</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Sessions</i>		<i>Not known</i>
	<i>Presbyteries</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Not known</i>
	<i>General Assembly</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Edinburgh Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	<a href="https://freechurch.org">https://freechurch.org</a>		

**History of the relationship**

The CanRC relationship with the FCS came into being primarily through contact with them via the establishment of the ICRC in the early 1980s. The first full conference was held in Edinburgh in 1985. Further acquaintance was made with the FCS during this time in Scotland. GS 1992 offered to enter into EF with the FCS and this was accepted by the FCS at their GA in 1993.

In 2000, the FCC separated from the FCS. It is noted with sadness that attempts at reconciliation between the FCS and FCC were not fruitful. By 2016, the mandate from GS regarding the FCS no longer included the charge to the committee to encourage reconciliation with the FCC, as no request was received to assist with this (as per GS 2013 mandate).

**Summary of the report**

While our relationship with the FCS cannot be characterized as very close since we do not have a lot of natural interaction, it is good to maintain our EF with them. When we visited their General Assembly in Edinburgh in May 2017, we definitely felt the bond of the brotherhood in Jesus Christ. From a perusal of their General Assembly documents we could get the impression of a church which is vibrant and committed to their witness of Christ in a secularized world. There was good interaction between CanRC delegates and FCS delegates at the ICRC held in Jordan, Ontario in July 2017.

Your committee is **recommending** that EF with the FCS be maintained and further that your committee be mandated to visit the General Assembly of the FCS between now and our next synod.

1 **FCC: Introduction**

2 The CanRC entered into EF with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) by a decision of GS 1992 (art. 128). In  
3 2000, the FCC broke away from the FCS.

4 **Brief description of FCC**

Location	<i>Mainly Scotland, also Northern Ireland, Canada and the United States of America</i>		
Origin	<i>Separation from the FCS in 2000</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>40 churches</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>811 members</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Sessions</i>		<i>Quarterly<sup>5</sup></i>
	<i>Presbyteries</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Not known</i>
	<i>General Assembly</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Done by ministers appointed for this task</i>		
Website	<a href="http://www.freechurchcontinuing.org">www.freechurchcontinuing.org</a>		

5 **History of the relationship**

6 The CanRC relationship with the FCS came into being primarily through contact with them via the  
7 establishment of the ICRC in the early 1980s. In 2000, 22 ministers who had been suspended from the FCS,  
8 together with a number of others, adopted a “Declaration of Reconstitution of the historic Free Church of  
9 Scotland” which led to the formation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). The broad background to  
10 the separation were differences in liturgical convictions (FCC maintains exclusive psalmody and no  
11 instruments in worship whereas the FCS no longer holds those positions) as well as differences in the  
12 application of certain principles of church government (as this came to the fore in the case of Prof. Donald  
13 Macleod).

14 The CanRC maintained EF with both the FCS and FCC from 2000 to 2007, all the while encouraging both  
15 sides to reconcile. At GS 2007, the CanRC decided to discontinue EF with the FCC. Three years later, at GS  
16 2010, the CanRC decided to reinstate EF with the FCC. By 2016, the mandate from GS regarding the FCC no  
17 longer included the charge to the committee to encourage reconciliation with the FCS, as no request was  
18 received to assist with this (as per GS 2013 mandate).

19 **Summary of the report**

20 While our relationship with the FCC cannot be characterized as very close since we do not have a lot of  
21 natural interaction and we do not share some of their liturgical convictions, it is good to maintain our EF  
22 with them. When we visited their General Assembly in Edinburgh in May 2017, we definitely felt the bond  
23 of the brotherhood in Jesus Christ. From a perusal of their General Assembly documents we could get the  
24 impression of a church which is committed to their witness of Christ in a secularized world. There was good  
25 interaction between CanRC delegates and FCC delegates at the ICRC held in Jordan, Ontario in July 2017.

26 Your committee is **recommending** that EF with the FCC be maintained and further that your committee  
27 be mandated to visit the General Assembly of the FCC between now and our next synod.

---

<sup>5</sup> Before and after each communion Sunday, held twice per year

## **South Africa (FRCSA)**

### **Introduction**

The CanRC began regular correspondence with the Free Reformed Churches in<sup>6</sup> South Africa already in the first years of our federation’s existence; at our first synod in 1954, held in Homewood, the decision was made to establish meaningful communication with the FRCSA (art. 54). Our relationship with the FRCSA is thus one of our longest ones.

### **Brief description of FRCSA**

Location	<i>South Africa, which has been experiencing significant political and economic unrest during the past few decades. Current political developments in the country are worrisome as those with Marxist sympathies seem to be gaining increasing political control.</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>The FRCSA has a very similar migration story as both the CanRC and FRCA. However, the FRCSA is very engaged in mission and relief work, particularly amongst some neighboring black / disadvantaged communities.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds &amp; Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>7 instituted churches and numerous preaching points.</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>~ 1450</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Varies</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Triennially</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>See subsection on CRTS</i>		
Website	<a href="http://www.vgk.org.za/">http://www.vgk.org.za/</a>		

### **History of the relationship**

Our common ecclesiastical and ancestral heritages, combined with comparable emigration experiences, have resulted in a sense of close kinship with our South African brothers and sisters. As in our federation, the first church institution in the FRCSA occurred in 1950. A review of the Acts of our synods of just the last 15 years reveals a warm relationship.

Broadly speaking, as the English language has become more familiar in South Africa, as challenges inhibiting international travel have diminished, and as the “distance” between the FRCSA and the GKv has increased, our South African brothers and sisters are increasingly seeking to intensify their communications and connections with the FRCA and the CanRC federations.

### **Summary of the report**

The relationship with the FRCSA has been a meaningful one. Language barriers are minimal. Our delegates who visited the 2017 Synod sensed that there was deep appreciation for our presence and input. It appears that in the future they will be leaning less and less on the GKv. On the other hand, since Canadian experiences related to many of the topics under discussion on their table (including not only the CRTS but also their relationship with other federations in their own country) are considered helpful and relevant to them, they appreciated our interest and involvement. Consequently, your committee is **recommending** that EF with the FRCSA continue along the same trajectory as we have experienced for the past several synods.

---

<sup>6</sup> Many acts have “of South Africa”, but it should be “in South Africa”.

## ***International (ICRC)***

### **Introduction**

The CanRC are a charter member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) as per a decision of GS 1983 (art. 121).

### **Brief description of the ICRC**

The ICRC is a conference or fellowship of Reformed and Presbyterian churches around the world.

Location	<i>Global</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Constituent Assembly in 1982, attended by CanRC, EPCI, FCS, FRCA, FRCSA, KPCK, GGRI-NTT, RPCT, GKv.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity Westminster Standards Any documents agreeing with these (e.g. Gallic Confession, Second Helvetic Confession)</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>32 member-churches in 6 continents</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>987,573 (total of membership of all churches)</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency (Note: these “assemblies” are conferences)	<i>Regional</i>	<i>3+3<sup>7</sup></i>	<i>Varies between annual to once every 4 years.</i>
	<i>International</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Quadrennial</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Not applicable</i>		
Website	<a href="http://www.icrconline.com">www.icrconline.com</a>		

### **History of our membership**

During the late 1970s the FRCA floated the idea of creating an international synod, consisting of the family of Reformed (liberated) churches (i.e. GKv, CanRC, FRCA, FRCSA, and GGRI). In response the GKv in 1979 decided to begin with a conference to which all its sister churches would be invited. This would create a global platform for discussion for orthodox Reformed and Presbyterian churches who did not feel at home in the WCC (World Council of Churches), WARC (World Alliance of Reformed Churches), RES/REC (Reformed Ecumenical Synod/Council), or ICCC (International Council of Christian Churches).<sup>8</sup> A conference was held in 1982 in The Netherlands at which the ICRC was formed. The first formal conference was held in Scotland in 1985.

Since 1985 the ICRC has met once every four years. The CanRC have been heavily involved as the Corresponding Secretary and the Treasurer of the ICRC have always been from the Canadian/American Reformed Churches. During the late 1990s the ICRC saw a growth spurt in church membership as churches left the REC because it refused to expel a member church for liberal doctrine.

A quadrennial conference was convened July 12-19, 2017 in Jordan, ON, hosted by the URCNA.

### **Summary of the report**

The 2017 conference was attended by a delegation of CanRC members from three of the four inter-church relations committees. This ICRC admitted two new members: the CRCAus and the UPC. Upon a motion from the OPC, seconded by the CanRC, the membership of the GKv was suspended because its recent decision to allow women to serve in all church offices puts it at odds with the ICRC constitution. The proposed revisions to the constitution, among others approved by our synod in 2016, were adopted. The ICRC adopted a proposal from the GKv to take over *Lux Mundi* as its magazine.

<sup>7</sup> The African, European, and Asia-Pacific Conferences are full ICRC regional conferences. In other places, independent conferences exist: North America has NAPARC, Latin America has CLIR, and India has RPF.

<sup>8</sup> WARC and REC are now merged in the WCRC (World Communion of Reformed Churches). Similar in confessional identity to the ICRC is the WRF (World Reformed Fellowship), it came into existence after the ICRC.

1 Your committee is **recommending** that CanRC membership in the ICRC be continued and further that  
2 your committee be mandated to make arrangements for a CanRC delegation of four members to attend the  
3 next quadrennial conference, to be held, DV, in 2021 (in India or, alternatively, in Australia). This delegation  
4 should be representative of the various CanRC inter-church relations committees.

## SECTION 2 – FULL-LENGTH CRCA REPORT

The foregoing section 1 presented an easier-to-read summary of our full-length report. The full-length report follows now in section 2. It fleshes out what is found in section 1 with more detail, and presents to the churches assembled in synod observations, considerations, and recommendation for synod’s possible use.

### **PART 1: GENERAL**

#### ***Overview of Activities***

With common accord the CRCA appointed br. O. Bouwman as its chairman and Rev. R.C. Janssen as secretary. The work was divided among the CRCA members as follows:

<b>Country</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
Australia / New Zealand	Rev. A. Witten	H. Schouten
Brazil	H. Schouten	A. Witten
Indonesia	R.C. Janssen	O. Bouwman
Korea	S.C. VanDam	J. VanLaar
Scotland	J. VanLaar	S.C. VanDam
South Africa	O. Bouwman	R.C. Janssen
ICRC	R.C. Janssen	S.C. VanDam

In various ways the CRCA was assisted by “outsiders” in the execution of its mandates. With gratitude we mention in particular: Rev. J. de Gelder (New Zealand), Rev. Dr. A. deVisser (South Africa), br. J. Lee (Korea), br. J. Vanderstoep (Scotland), br. H. Ludwig (Brazil), Rev. A. Pol (Indonesia), and Rev. H. Versteeg (Indonesia). We are also grateful for the interaction we could have with the Smithville CanRC and the Timor Mission Board regarding Indonesia.

The CRCA met on the following dates:

In 2016: on May 24, June 20, October 12 and December 5

In 2017 on March 20, June 21, September 1 and December 13

In 2018 on April 5, May 24, September 12, and October 10

The CRCA is grateful to the Abbotsford CanRC for use of its facilities – especially handy where video conferencing is concerned.

#### ***Interaction with other CanRC inter church relations committees***

The CRCA was mandated to cooperate as much as possible with other CanRC inter-church relations committees with a view to a delegation to the ICRC (July 2017). The experience of a multi-committee delegation to the ICRC was very positive.

The CRCA and CCCNA also felt a need to compare notes and experiences on how we as CanRC practice inter-church relations. Together the CCCNA and CRCA present a report for the churches. That report forms section 3 of this report.

#### ***Interactions with churches not part of our mandate***

##### **Germany**

Beginning in July 2016, the CRCA received correspondence from Rev. S. Heck, minister with what is now the Independent Evangelical-Reformed Church [Germany] (SERK). Rev. Heck came into contact with the CRCA upon the advice of Rev. Dr. J. VanVliet. Rev. Heck inquired about the possibility of a relationship between the CanRC and the SERK.

We advised Rev. Heck that as committee we cannot act upon such a request as such a mandate has to come to us via synod and comes to synod via the way of the church order. We thus advised Rev. Heck to seek contact with a local CanRC. We also advised Rev. Heck to look for relationships closer to home, in Europe. Our last contact with the SERK was in August, 2017. We understand that the SERK has recently

1 entered into a relationship with the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN, aka Reformed Churches in  
2 The Netherlands, temporary federation = RCNtf).

3 **Hungary and surroundings**

4 Present at the ICRC was Rev. Imre Szoke, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern  
5 Europe (KKERPE). The KKERPE is a church that formed due to liberalizing tendencies within the Hungarian  
6 Reformed Church. It formed initially under the influence of a PCA ministry. There is a link via members  
7 between the KKERPE and the London CanRC. Further, two of the CanRC delegates to the ICRC (Rev. Dr. R.C.  
8 Janssen and Dr. J. Temple) have both, in person, been involved with the KKERPE in the past

9 The same information and advice that was provided to the SERK was given to the KKERPE.

10 **Reacting to requests for contact**

11 We note that our way of receiving and processing requests for relationships is rather puzzling to churches  
12 abroad. In the past the CRCA did have a mandate to consider requests for contact or a relationship and  
13 bring that to the attention of a general synod. Our relationship with the RCUS began in that way. However,  
14 GS 2013 (art. 81, cons. 3) suggests that proposals for relationships must come via the minor assemblies  
15 (referring to GS 1998, art. 98, cons. III.A).

16 In light of the foregoing we come with the following.

17 **1. Observation**

18 We advise synod to include among its observations:

- 19 1.1 The logical point of contact with the CanRC for a church abroad is often the CRCA, not a local  
20 CanRC.

21 **2. Considerations:**

22 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 23 2.1. It is proper for the CRCA to maintain contact with a church abroad, even without it having an  
24 explicit mandate to do so.  
25 2.2. It is improper for the CRCA to proceed towards intensifying this contact towards ecclesiastical  
26 fellowship without having an explicit mandate from the churches via synod to do so.

27 **3. Recommendation:**

28 We recommend that synod decide:

- 29 3.1 To mandate the CRCA to report on any contact a church abroad seeks with the CanRC, and via  
30 a report to synod, recommend whether or not to pursue intensification of the contact.  
31 3.2 To submit such reports to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general  
32 synod.

33 ***Finances***

34 The CRCA has maintained a record of its costs over the period since GS 2016. We are grateful to our  
35 treasurer, Br. G. Vandersluis, for the very prompt manner in which reimbursements are issued.

36 All the costs of CRCA relate to visits made in accordance with the various mandates given us by GS 2016.  
37 We note that GS 2016 explicitly stated that a sister church relationship cannot be considered meaningful if  
38 we do not regularly send a delegation to the broadest assembly of a sister church (e.g. GS 2016 art. 45 rec.  
39 4.2.1). "Regularly" is understood to mean once every three years.

40 Our total costs for the period June 2016 – October 2018 come to: \$36,313.85.

41 ***Appointments***

42 Between GS 2016 and GS 2019 the following brothers served on the CRCA.

Name	Year appointed	Name	Year appointed
J. VanLaar	2010	R.C. Janssen	2016
A. Witten	2013	O. Bouwman	2013
S.C. VanDam	2016	H. Schouten	2016

1 Since he has served for 9 years now, br. J. VanLaar has requested that he not be reappointed. We express  
2 gratitude for the years in which he has served. In the event the CRCA-SRN is no longer continued, and the  
3 CRCA becomes directly responsible once again for relationships in The Netherlands, the CRCA would like to  
4 see a seventh person appointed to the CRCA. We also note that Rev. Witten now resides in London, ON. We  
5 hasten to add that in the past three-year period he has only ever attended one CRCA meeting in person,  
6 and yet missed none of them, thanks to video conferencing.

7 For the sake of consistency in practices and for the sake of general knowledge, it is important that every  
8 relationship the CanRC has with a church abroad is managed by a member on the CRCA. This means that an  
9 increased number of relationships for the committee to deal with also means an increased workload. We  
10 do recognize that it is not necessary for only CRCA members to be delegated to sister churches on behalf of  
11 the CanRC.

12 Given our experience with video conferencing, the location of our members is not an issue.

13 Your committee will be sending a confidential letter to synod with recommendations of who could be  
14 appointed to the CRCA to fill the vacancies.

15 In the event the CRCA-SRN is continued, the number of CRCA members can remain at 6, and no special  
16 action by synod is required.

17 In the event the CRCA-SRN is discontinued, we request that synod note the following:

18 **1. Observation:**

19 We advise synod to include among its observations:

- 20 1.1 With “The Netherlands” returning to the responsibility of the CRCA, the workload of the CRCA  
21 will increase.

22 **2. Considerations:**

23 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 24 2.1 In view of the increased workload it is advisable to increase the CRCA from 6 to 7 members.  
25 Effectively this is a reduction from 10 to 7 members, as the 4-member CRCA-SRN has been  
26 dissolved.

- 27 2.2 It is important that at least one of those involved in maintaining a relationship with a church  
28 abroad be directly aware of CanRC policy and practice, and thus should be part of the CRCA.

29 **3. Recommendation:**

30 We recommend that synod decide:

- 31 3.1 To expand the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to seven (7) members.

32 ***Other general matters***

33 It so happened to be that two of the members of the CRCA as appointed by GS 2016 were also delegates  
34 at GS 2016. As such, they had access to all the correspondence that GS 2016 received in response to the  
35 CRCA report submitted prior to GS 2016. One letter in particular – from the Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC – had  
36 helpful pointers on how best to report to the churches in an intelligible way. Though not passed on to the  
37 CRCA by synod for consideration, we did take the liberty to take its pointers to heart.

38 Synod did pass on another letter for our consideration. We greatly benefited from this.

39 The lesson we draw from this is that it would be advisable for the CRCA by default to receive all  
40 correspondence to a general synod in response to a CRCA report, unless synod determines this should not  
41 happen. That way the CRCA has a more comprehensive understanding of the desires and concerns that exist  
42 among the churches.

43 In light of the foregoing we submit the following:

44 **1. Observation:**

45 We advise synod to include among its observations:

- 46 1.1 It is helpful for the CRCA to be aware of what desires and concerns exist among the churches.  
47 To attain this awareness, the CRCA has requested access to submissions from CanRC in response  
48 to CRCA reports to synods.

- 1       **2. Consideration:**
- 2       We advise synod to include among its considerations:
- 3             2.2 While there may be the occasional letter from a CanRC that should not be passed on to the
- 4             CRCA, it is indeed helpful for the CRCA to receive copies of submissions to synod in response to
- 5             its reports, so as to be aware of the desires and concerns that exist among the churches.
- 6       **3. Recommendations:**
- 7       We recommend that synod decide:
- 8             3.1 To grant the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) access to submissions from
- 9             CanRC in response to its reports unless synod deems it unwise to do so.
- 10            3.2 To mandate the CRCA to acquire these submissions from the second clerk once synod has
- 11            closed.
- 12

## **PART 2: RELATIONSHIPS**

### **Australia (FRCA)**

For statistics and further general information see the summary of the report.

#### **History of the Relationship**

GS 1954 (Art. 54) decided to seek correspondence with the FRCA. GS 1958 noted with thankfulness that this was accepted by the FRCA. Subsequent CanRC synods have all dealt with correspondence from the FRCA, sent and received delegations, expressed appreciation for their ongoing support for the theological seminary, mandated the CRCA to maintain close contact with the various deputyships of the FRCA, and to discuss matters of mutual interest, e.g. mission work in Indonesia, *Book of Praise*, and third-party relationships.

#### **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

GS 2016 (art. 21) decided:

- 4.1 *To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules;*
- 4.2. *To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing support for and interest in the Theological Seminary, including their financial support;*
- 4.3. *To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)*
  - 4.3.1 *To maintain close contact with the various deputyships of the FRCA in matters of relations with sister-churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third party relationships;*
  - 4.3.2 *To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP), the Subcommittee for Reformed churches in The Netherlands of the CRCA (CRCA-SRN), our committee in charge of reviewing the liturgical forms, Committee on Bible Translations, and perhaps others) in areas of mutual interest where the CRCA's mandate does not reach;*
  - 4.3.3 *To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2018.*

#### **Execution of the Mandate**

The decisions of GS 2016 regarding the FRCA were made known to the FRCA via letter. The CanRC rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Acts of Synod Dunnville and the Press Release were sent to the FRCA. At their invitation, br. H. Schouten and Rev. A. Witten were delegated to attend Synod Bunbury held from June 18–26, 2018. They were received and seated as fraternal delegates. Opportunity was given to address synod. The delegates thanked the FRCA for their continued support for CRTS and expressed concerns about the impact that the establishment at this time of an Australian Reformed Theological seminary would have on the CRTS and on both of our respective federations. Other topics touched on were mission work and relationships with churches abroad and in North America. The CanRC delegates invited the various deputyships of the FRCA to take up direct contact with the corresponding CanRC Committee. During their time at synod, the delegates sat in on open sessions of Synod, and met separately with committees of synod, and discussed with the various deputyships of the FRCA matters of mutual interest.

#### **FRCA matters**

From the Acts and Press Release of Synod Bunbury 2018 we report the following.

##### **Canadian Reformed Churches**

Synod Bunbury decided to continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules. Deputies were mandated to monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed. They were to monitor developments within the CanRC in relation to Blessings Christian Church in line with the questions expressed in the deputy's report. These questions were as follows:

1           The deputies understand from classical documents, that Blessings recently removed  
2 themselves from one classis without mutual consent and joined a neighbouring classis. (cf.  
3 Classis Ontario West, September 2017). Further, we note that Blessings Christian Church has  
4 no defined church boundary or catchment area, and additionally specifies its members to give  
5 evidence of a commitment to mission/outreach. Deputies question how such developments  
6 function within the CanRC and whether they are consistent with the plain reading of the agreed  
7 Church Order.

8 The CanRC delegates expressed appreciation for the FRCA's commitment to our mutual accountability as  
9 sister churches, cautioned against hastily evaluating new developments but to give attention to what, if  
10 anything, is decided by CanRC assemblies on this. Synod Bunbury also mandated their deputies to stay  
11 informed on the developments in the relationship between the CanRC and the URCNA and to send two  
12 delegates to the next CanRC General Synod in 2019.

### 13 **The Training for the Ministry**

14 Synod Bunbury decided to continue to support the CRTS, requesting the churches to match the  
15 contributions per communicant member within the CanRC. Synod Bunbury decided that it is not feasible to  
16 establish a Free Reformed Theological Seminary at this time and mandated the Deputies to investigate the  
17 possibility of pursuing distance education with the CRTS, particularly the establishment of the first year of  
18 seminary training in Australia. They also mandated the committee to present a report to the next synod  
19 with a strategic plan for the establishment of a regional seminary in the medium to long term. Regardless  
20 of what future decisions may be taken, strong support for and appreciation of the CRTS remains a prominent  
21 feature in this sister church relationship. Quoting Synod Bunbury's press release, "We praise God for the  
22 faithful, quality instruction given at the CRTS and pray that the Lord would continue to bless this institution."

### 23 **The Book of Praise**

24 The Australian churches have consistently expressed their thankfulness for the Canadian *Book of Praise*,  
25 but at the same time there has been a desire for an Australian *Book of Praise*. Synod Bunbury decided to  
26 adopt and produce an Australian version of the Canadian *Book of Praise* that:

- 27 1. includes the Psalms and Hymns of the 2014 Canadian *Book of Praise*, including the 19 hymns added  
28 by the CanRC in adopting the 2014 *Book of Praise*;
- 29 2. includes creeds, confessions, and liturgical forms as found in the 2014 Canadian *Book of Praise*, with  
30 adopted changes made by the FRCA, as well as the Australian Church Order (as in the Canadian  
31 *Book of Praise*)
- 32 3. makes use of the ESV translation of the Bible (as in the Canadian *Book of Praise*);
- 33 4. does not capitalise the personal pronouns for God.
- 34 5. will be called the "Australian *Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter*", subject to approval from the  
35 Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches, with Deputies for  
36 the *Book of Praise* being granted the liberty to select an appropriate title in the event that the SCBP  
37 of the CanRC declines to grant such approval.

38 Synod Bunbury decided to appoint a Standing Committee for the Australian *Book of Praise*. This committee  
39 is to look after the publication of the Australian *Book of Praise* and to maintain good contact the Standing  
40 Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* of the CanRC.

### 41 **Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (GKv)**

42 Synod Bunbury decided to terminate the sister relationship with the GKv. The following grounds were  
43 given to support this decision:

- 44 1. The relationship with the GKv has become untenable due to their use of the "New Hermeneutic":  
45 principles allowing the current cultural context to play a determining role in explaining scripture.  
46 This has allowed the GKv to turn away from the clear instruction of God's Word and has shown  
47 unfaithfulness by lack of submission to that Word.
- 48 2. The evidence of ground 1 above is given particular expression in the recent decision of the GKv

1 (GS-GKv 2017 (Meppel)) to allow women to the offices of deacon, elder, and minister.

2 3. There has been no adequate response, let alone repentance, to earlier admonitions.

3 This historic decision to terminate this relationship was taken with soberness and sadness.

4 **The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (DGK) & Reformed Churches Netherlands (GKN)**

5 Synod decided to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK and the GKN, and encourage these  
6 two federations to work towards unity with one another. An obstacle in the development of a relationship  
7 with the DGK has been their acknowledgement of the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford (LRCA), a  
8 church which has declared the CanRC to be false. FRCA Synod Armadale 2012 decided that “the [DGK’s]  
9 relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford (LRCA) may be an impediment to a future  
10 sister church relationship with the [DGK].” Synod could note that some positive steps have been taken by  
11 the DGK towards the LRCA to understand their separation from the CanRC. Synod Bunbury mandated the  
12 deputies to keep informed about developments between the DGK and the LRCA, and to communicate with  
13 their respective Canadian Reformed counterparts on this issue.

14 **The Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ)**

15 The three-year-old sister church relationship with the RCNZ shows evidence of maturation. The  
16 relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCAus, and the Reformed Theological College in Melbourne were  
17 identified as matters that deserve continued attention. Synod could observe that the RCNZ gives “evidence  
18 of a love for the gospel, ongoing faithfulness to God’s Word, and a commitment to the Reformed faith, and  
19 no evidence has been presented of any deviation or unfaithfulness in this respect.” Synod mandated the  
20 deputies to seek with the RCNZ a way to overcome the difference in the financial arrangements for retiring  
21 ministers. In the RCNZ the emeritus fund is connected to the minister, not the churches (as it is in FRCA and  
22 CanRC). In some cases, this presents an obstacle to calling one another’s ministers.

23 **Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI, GGRC, GGRI-Timor)**

24 FRCA Synod 2012 (Armadale) noted that the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI) “is now a larger  
25 federation as a result of the union in February 2012 of what were previously three federations, namely the  
26 federation of GGRI-NTT, the federation of churches in Papua, and the federation of churches in Kalimantan  
27 Barat” and mandated the deputies to report to the churches with more information concerning this larger  
28 federation with its three regional synods. At both Synod Baldivis 2015 as well as Synod Bunbury 2018 this  
29 mandate was renewed, since it was decided that not enough has been reported about the Reformed  
30 character of these federations. It was also reported that some troubling aspects in the area of church polity  
31 and liturgy have developed in the GGRI. These concerns were deemed sufficiently serious to require the  
32 addition of a new element to the mandate of the deputies: monitoring, evaluating and offering advice about  
33 these developments. Contact with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC) was continued,  
34 while Synod also mandated deputies to establish official contact with a newly-formed federation in  
35 Indonesia, the GGRI-Timor. This is a federation that came into existence in 2016 and was the result of  
36 mission work supported by the Smithville CanRC. The deputies were also given the task to encourage the  
37 GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor.

38 **Other relationships**

39 Synod Bunbury decided to continue the sister church relationship with the First Evangelical Reformed  
40 Church of Singapore (FERC), Kosin Presbyterian church of Korea (KPCK) and the Free Reformed Churches in  
41 South Africa (FRCSA). The deputies were mandated “to coordinate responses to any requests for support  
42 from Deputies within the FRCSA (including either Needy Churches or Theological Training).

43 Synod Bunbury decided to establish a deputyship to investigate the Southern Presbyterian Church and the  
44 Evangelical Presbyterian Church, with whom the FRCA in Tasmania have had contact. They will report to  
45 the next synod on the feasibility of further ecumenical contact.

46 The OPC and URCNA had observers who addressed Synod Bunbury. Synod decided to instruct their  
47 deputies to continue to liaise with URCNA and to recommend to Synod 2021 whether to proceed in a sister

1 church relationship. Regarding the OPC, Synod decided to establish contact and report to the next synod  
2 with information about these churches.

### 3 **Observations**

4 We advise synod to include among its observations:

5 1. GS 2016 (art. 21) decided:

6 4.1 *To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches of*  
7 *Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules;*

8 4.2. *To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing support for and interest in the*  
9 *Theological Seminary, including their financial support;*

10 4.3. *To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)*

11 4.3.1 *To maintain close contact with the various deputyships of the FRCA in matters of relations*  
12 *with sister-churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third*  
13 *party relationships;*

14 4.3.2 *To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding*  
15 *CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise*  
16 *(SCBP), the Subcommittee for Reformed churches in The Netherlands of the CRCA (CRCA-SRN),*  
17 *our committee in charge of reviewing the liturgical forms, Committee on Bible Translations,*  
18 *and perhaps others) in areas of mutual interest where the CRCA's mandate does not reach;*

19 4.3.3 *To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2018.*

20 2. Br. H. Schouten and Rev. A. Witten attended Synod Bunbury 2018.

21 3. Synod Bunbury decided to instruct their deputies to continue to liaise with both the URCNA and the  
22 OPC with a view to closer relationships.

23 4. Synod Bunbury decided to establish a deputyship to investigate the Southern Presbyterian Church  
24 and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

25 5. Synod Bunbury decided with sadness to terminate the sister church relationship with the GkV.

26 6. Synod Bunbury decided to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK and the GKN, and  
27 encourage these two federations to work towards unity with one another. Synod Bunbury  
28 recognises the relationship between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford as  
29 significant.

30 7. Synod Bunbury decided to appoint a Standing Committee for the Australian *Book of Praise*. This  
31 committee will publish an Australian *Book of Praise* and maintain good contact the Standing  
32 Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* of the CanRC.

33 8. Synod Bunbury decided that it is not feasible to establish a Free Reformed Theological Seminary at  
34 this time and mandated the Deputies to investigate the possibility of pursuing distance education  
35 with the CRTS, particularly the establishment of the first year of seminary training in Australia. They  
36 also mandated the committee to present a report to the next synod outlining a plan for the  
37 establishment of a seminary in the medium to long term.

38 9. Synod Bunbury mandated the deputies to accept the invitation for the CRTS to participate in the *ad*  
39 *hoc* committee investigating the possibility of distance education.

### 40 **Considerations**

41 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

42 1. From our communications with the FRCA both in official contact and private conversations,  
43 attendance of local worship services and observations at Synod Bunbury it is clear that this sister  
44 church remains a faithful church. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life  
45 and adhere to adopted confessions and church order.

46 2. The value of this relationship is evident particularly in the ongoing cooperation in theological  
47 education and mission work. The FRCA take the responsibilities of ecclesiastical fellowship seriously  
48 as evidenced by their monitoring and questions about developments in our churches. The CanRC

1 can assist the FRCA in the production of an Australian *Book of Praise* and exploring possibilities for  
2 distance education from CRTS.

### 3 **Recommendations**

4 We recommend that synod decide:

- 5 1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches of  
6 Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules;
- 7 2. To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing support for and interest in the  
8 Theological Seminary, including their financial support;
- 9 3. To encourage the board of governors and Senate of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary  
10 (CRTS) to continue contact with the deputyship for theological education in the FRCA in matters  
11 pertaining to their desire to have the first year CRTS program available as distance education in the  
12 short term and their desire to establish a regional seminary in Australia in the medium to long term;
- 13 4. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
  - 14 4.1 To maintain close contact with the deputyship of the FRCA in matters of relations with sister-  
15 churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third party  
16 relationships;
  - 17 4.2 To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding  
18 CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*, our committee in  
19 charge of reviewing the liturgical forms, Committee on Bible Translations) in areas of mutual  
20 interest where the CRCA's mandate does not reach;
  - 21 4.3 To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2021;
  - 22 4.4 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

23

## **Brazil (IRB)**

For statistics and further general information see the summary of the report.

### **History of the Relationship**

1970: The CanRC of New Westminster (later Surrey) began a missionary work in Sao Jose, Pernambuco.

1992: The CanRC of Hamilton began a mission project in Maceio, Alagoas.

2000 (June): The IRB held its first *Concilio* (Synod) and became a federation. At this *Concilio* the IRB decided to request a sister church relationship with the CanRC.

GS 2001 decided to offer a relationship of EF to the IRB. This relationship was accepted.

The CRCA has sent delegates to a number of IRB *Concilio*s since the relationship of EF began in 2001. The CRCA has also made use of brothers sent to Brazil by the sending Church of Surrey as well as the sending Church of Aldergrove, who took over the work from the Church of Surrey in 2012. The most recent visit by the CRCA was made in November of 2017 by brother Harold Ludwig (Aldergrove Mission Board and Council) and brother Henry Schouten (CRCA).

### **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

GS 2016 (art. 88) decided:

4.1 To express gratitude for the continued growth evident in the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB);

4.2 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the IRB under the adopted rules;

4.3 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to these churches.

### **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018**

The following lists the contacts with the IRB since Synod 2016 up to the time of the writing of this report in May 2018:

- Received acts of the 27th *Concilio* of the IRB held in Unai, MG from May 23 to 28, 2016.
- Received acts of the 29th *Concilio* of the IRB held in Maragogi, AL from May 8 to 12, 2017.
- Received an invitation to send delegates to the 30th *Concilio* of the IRB. Received acts of the 30th *Concilio* of the IRB held in Recife, PB from Nov 6 to 10, 2017.
- Sent a prayer request for the November 2017 *Concilio* of the IRB to every CanRC.
- Sent two delegates to the *Concilio* held in Recife, PB from November 6 – 10, 2017.
- Sent a letter with contact information and a description of the CRCA work to the IRB, including GS 2016 art. 88.
- Contact was made at the ICRC held July 10 – 19, 2017.

The invitation to attend the 30th *Concilio* of the IRB was accepted and brs. Harold Ludwig and Henry Schouten were delegated to attend on behalf of the CRCA. Some of the highlights dealt with by this *Concilio* follow.

- The examination of candidates for the ministry, Elton da Silva and Madson Marinho de Souza
- A new proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the CanRC in Aldergrove and the IRB with respect to the IJC
- The relationship with the GKv in light of recent decisions by that federation
- Financial requests

Some of these matters were difficult to deal with. It was observed that the brothers delegated to *Concilio* were all very capable and were all very sincere in their desire to make each decision in the light of God's Word and the confessions of the Church summarizing the doctrines in God's Word.

The examination of the candidates for the Ministry of the Word was done in a way very similar to that used by the CanRC. Both brothers sustained the examination and were declared eligible for call.

The joy of the first two days, seeing two candidates declared eligible for call in the IRB, was somewhat tempered by the grief of going through the process of dismissing Pr. Thyago A. Lins from his call. Even though the IRB is a very young federation, they showed great care and love in how they had dealt with this

1 brother over a three-year period.

2 The IRB is a young federation but is very aware of the things happening in the GKv. During discussion  
3 they were very interested in what the position of the CanRC is with respect to the GKv as well as in the  
4 decision taken at the recent ICRC. The decision of this *Concilio* is that their Committee for Contact with  
5 Churches Abroad will draw up a letter of exhortation to the GKv calling them to repentance and that in the  
6 second *Concilio* of 2018, they will evaluate their EF with the GKv. This decision was made with sadness,  
7 especially because the GKv has been very involved in the mission work in Southern Brazil.

8 The IRB takes its responsibility with respect to evangelism seriously. The biggest obstacle to doing  
9 everything they would like to in this area is financial. Most of the congregations have a hard time paying  
10 their own expenses and some cannot afford to pay for a minister of the Word.

11 During private conversations outside of regular *Concilio* hours, questions were asked about the  
12 relationship of the IRB with the IPB. The IRB representatives spoken to want to be very careful with this.  
13 The IPB is a large denomination with a wide spectrum of doctrine in their Churches. Some congregations  
14 desire to be very biblical and reformed while others are far from that.

15 It was reason for much thankfulness to see the IRB at work in their *Concilio*. The work of looking after the  
16 people of God is taken very seriously. Much of *Concilio* was focused on the training of ministers of the Word,  
17 on the exercise of discipline in the churches, on the spread of the gospel in Brazil, and generally on the care  
18 for the members of the churches, the sheep. It was also very clear that there is a strong desire to be a  
19 faithful Reformed Church and the desire was uniform through all the men we were able to meet during our  
20 stay.

## 21 Observations

22 The IRB is a young federation and is excited about the reformed faith. They place a very high value on  
23 their confessions, the Three Forms of Unity, and see these as very important to know and to live by as  
24 churches. They consider themselves very young and look to the CanRC as a much older and wiser federation  
25 which has been blessed with the confessions that came out of the reformation for many generations  
26 already. For that reason, the relationship is important from both sides. They look to the CanRC for guidance  
27 (as for example in the approach to take with the GKv) and we can look to the IRB to be reminded of our rich  
28 heritage, to value it, and to hold on to it so that the CanRC may remain a faithful federation.

29 It is also good to remember that the IRB has EF with only two federations: the CanRC and the GKv. The  
30 second one of these may not last too much longer. They are also a member of the ICRC and were able to  
31 send a delegate to the conference held in 2017. They may not be able to do this every time because of  
32 financial and time constraints. They have some communication with the IPB in Brazil but are very cautious  
33 about pursuing this relationship because they perceive there is much Arminian theology in this federation.  
34 For these reasons they rely very heavily on the relationship they have with the CanRC.

35 There are three specific concerns the IRB has in which we as CanRC continue to give assistance.

- 36 1. The training of men for the ministry of the Word and the training of men for the offices of elder and  
37 deacon are mostly beyond the ability of the IRB at this time. They are too small to have the men  
38 and the resources able to do this. They are assisted in this work by the sending churches of  
39 Aldergrove and Hamilton largely through the work of the IJC.
- 40 2. Financially, the IRB is a very poor federation. They desire assistance in supporting ministers of the  
41 Word, in paying for buildings to worship in, in looking after a seminary, in providing ministers of the  
42 Word with funds to buy books and in their outreach efforts.
- 43 3. Because the IRB is a young federation with many new believers there continues to be a lot for  
44 these believers to learn. This is being worked on by the sending churches and the mission workers by  
45 way of regular teaching in various formats.

46 We advise synod to include among its **observations**:

- 47 1. GS 2016 (art. 88) decided:  
48 4.1 To express gratitude for the continued growth evident in the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB);

1 4.2 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the IRB under the adopted  
2 rules;

3 4.3 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to use every opportunity  
4 to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to these churches.

5 2. It is noted with gratitude that there is good communication between the IRB and the CanRC not only  
6 through the CRCA but also through the sending churches of Aldergrove and Hamilton-Cornerstone  
7 and those that support their work.

8 3. It is noted with gratitude that the CanRC is able to do much work in Brazil through the sending  
9 Churches. It is noted with gratitude that the IRB was able to send a delegate to the ICRC meeting in  
10 2017.

### 11 **Consideration**

12 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 13 1. In view of the needs in the IRB it is important to make every effort to maintain direct contact with  
14 them and to encourage the Churches and their leaders.

### 15 **Recommendations**

16 We recommend that synod decide:

- 17 1. To express gratitude for the continued desire of the IRB to grow in knowledge and faithfulness;  
18 2. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of Brazil  
19 (IRB) under the adopted rules;  
20 3. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):  
21 3.1 To use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to this  
22 federations of churches;  
23 3.2 To visit the IRB at least twice prior to the next GS-CanRC;  
24 3.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and Hamilton-Cornerstone  
25 CanRC given their mission work in Brazil;  
26 3.4 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.  
27

## **Indonesia (GGRI, GGRC)**

For statistics and further general information see the summary of the report.

### **GGRI: History of the Relationship**

GS 1954 (art. 54): Correspondence is to be sought with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia

GS 1958: No mention is made of Indonesia or of Sumba-Savu

GS 1962 (art. 128, 146): A proposal from the Barrhead CanRC to have correspondence with the two groups of Reformed Churches on East-Sumba-Savu (today known as the GGRI-NTT and the GBST) was rejected as Barrhead had not proven why such correspondence should be entered into and as language barrier would prevent the proper exercise of correspondence according to rules adopted by GS 1958.

GS 1998: Mention is made of Indonesian churches in the context of the ICRC and FRCA.

GS 2001 (art. 54): No mention of the GGRI, only of what is now the GGRC.

GS 2004 (art. 100): No EF yet with the GGRI as they are not sufficiently known to the CanRC.

GS 2007 (art. 151):

*5.2 To delay accepting the invitation from the GGRI to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship until all the necessary information is available to make a decision concerning ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRC.*

*5.3 To mandate the CRCA to encourage the GGRI to:*

*5.3.1 Promote efforts toward federative unity with the GGRC.*

*5.3.2 Cooperate with the GGRC in joint theological training.*

GS 2010 (art. 108):

*4.3 To acknowledge that unity between the CRCI [=GGRC] and the RCI [=GGRI] should not be a prerequisite for ecclesiastical fellowship with either of these church federations.*

*4.4 To accept the invitation of the RCI [=GGRI] to enter into a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship.*

*4.5 To maintain the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship under the adopted rules.*

*4.6 To mandate the CRCA:*

*4.6.1 To monitor the progress of dialogue between the RCI [=GGRI] and the CRCI [=GGRC] and where possible to continue to promote unity efforts between the CRCI [=GGRC] and the RCI [=GGRI].*

*4.6.2 To work in consultation with the FRCA, receiving their reports and any other information that would be helpful in assessing the ecclesiastical situation of these churches.*

GS 2013 (art. 123)

*4.2 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRI-NTT under the adopted rules;*

*4.3 To mandate the CRCA:*

*4.3.1 To discuss our rules for ecclesiastical fellowship with the Committee on Relations of the GGRI and to gather as much information as is needed to come to a good recommendation to General Synod 2016 regarding a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRI;*

*4.3.2 To gather and evaluate information regarding the GGRI-KalBar and the GGRI-Papua in order to prepare a proposal as to how to deal with the GGRI as a national federation instead of dealing exclusively with the GGRI-NTT, which has become part of this larger federation of churches.*

*4.3.3 To request input from the FRCA and the RCN.*

*4.3.4 To try to ensure that a delegation of two brothers is sent to Indonesia to represent the Canadian Reformed Churches at a synod of the GGRI-NTT.*

*4.3.5 To work in consultation and cooperation with the deputies of the FRCA, with the church of Smithville and the church of Edmonton (Immanuel), and as much as possible and desirable with other organizations involved in the work among the GGRI, to encourage and support these churches in their efforts to grow in the Reformed doctrine and Church Polity;*

*4.3.6 To encourage the GGRI-NTT to seek cooperation with the Reformed Theological School in Kupang (established by the church in Smithville);*

*4.3.7 To encourage the GGRI-NTT to seek closer contact and cooperation with the GGRC and to*

1                    *monitor the progress of the dialogue between the GGRI-NTT and the GGRC.*

2     **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

3     GS 2016 (art. 115) decided:

4        4.1 *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in*  
5        *Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT) under the adopted rules;*

6        4.2 *To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

7            4.2.1 *To discuss our rules for EF with the Committee on Relations of the GGRI and to gather as much*  
8            *information as is needed to come to a good recommendation to General Synod 2019 regarding*  
9            *a relationship of EF with the GGRI;*

10          4.2.2 *To gather and evaluate information regarding the GGRI-KalBar and the GGRI-Papua in order*  
11          *to prepare a proposal as to how to deal with the GGRI as a national federation instead of dealing*  
12          *exclusively with the GGRI-NTT, which has become part of this larger federation of churches;*

13          4.2.3 *To try to ensure that a delegation of two brothers is sent to Indonesia to represent the CanRC*  
14          *at a synod of the GGRI;*

15          4.2.4 *To work in consultation and cooperation with the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of*  
16          *Australia (FRCA) to encourage and support the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in*  
17          *the Reformed doctrine and church polity;*

18          4.2.5 *To encourage the GGRI to seek cooperation with the Reformed Theological School in Kupang*  
19          *(established by Smithville);*

20          4.2.6 *To encourage the GGRI to seek closer contact and cooperation with the Calvinist Reformed*  
21          *Churches (GGRC) and to monitor the progress of the dialogue between the GGRI and the GGRC.*

22        4.3 *To pass on the letter of the Toronto-Bethel CanRC to the CRCA for consideration.*

23     **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018**

24     There has been no explicit discussion with the GGRI on our rules for EF. They are maintained to the best  
25     of their and our ability. The GGRI lack many resources to function well. The expanse of their nation, the  
26     distance between their three provincial synods, and the fact that all three clusters of churches are in less  
27     affluent parts of Indonesia, make it very difficult for them to maintain the bonds of the three provincial  
28     synods, never mind bonds with foreign churches. They themselves lack the funds to attend foreign synods.<sup>9</sup>  
29     There are often also visa difficulties. Indeed, we understand that the absence of the GGRI-Papua at the  
30     GGRI-*nasional* was in part due to interference of the Papuan provincial government with the plans of the  
31     GGRI-Papua delegates to travel to Sumba.

32     In October 2016 Rev. R.C. Janssen and br. O. Bouwman attended, first the (general) synod of the GGRI-  
33     *nasional*, convened in Waingapu, and then, during the week following, the provincial synod of the GGRI-  
34     NTT, convened in Karinga. The visits to both these synods was coordinated with the delegation of the FRCA,  
35     and both travelled via Western Australia so as to be able to meet with FRCA members involved in the work  
36     in Indonesia. Further present at both synods were delegates from the GKv, from the GBST (“Bebas”  
37     churches: the Free Church of East Sumba<sup>10</sup>), and the GGRC. Following this visit, Rev. A.J. Pol and Rev. H.  
38     Versteeg assisted the CRCA by translating the decisions of these synods. We gratefully acknowledge their  
39     help.

40     During the visit to the GGRI information was gathered on the GGRI-KB and GGRI-Papua, on the  
41     relationship between the GGRI(-NTT) and the GGRC, and your delegates observed the “operations” of the

---

<sup>9</sup> Their attendance at the ICRC was paid for by the ICRC and GKv. Their attendance at FRCA synods is paid for by the FRCA. Many of their internal costs are paid for by either the FRCA or GKv.

<sup>10</sup> The GBST separated from the GGRI-NTT in the late 1960s, early 1970s, led by Rev. Goossens, a missionary from the GKv, who went “buitenverband”. We understand that the GBST generally tend to have a stricter position on ethical issues (such as cultural traditions) than the GGRI-NTT. As the GBST has no seminary of its own, it apparently has recently decided to send its students to STAKRI, the seminary operated under GGRI-Timor supervision.

1 national synod and the provincial synod.<sup>11</sup>

2 In 2017 the GGRI delegated two brothers to the ICRC. One flight was paid for by the ICRC in keeping with  
3 its policy. The other was paid for by DVN, the mission organization of the GKv, in consultation with the  
4 CRCA.

5 As the ICRC was in Jordan, close to Smithville, the CRCA hosted a meeting to which were invited the  
6 GGRC, the GGRI, the URCNA, the GKv, the FRCA, and the Smithville CanRC (Timor Mission Board). All were  
7 represented at this meeting, the FRCA via a Skype connection. At this meeting each party outlined their  
8 impression of the situation of Reformed churches in Indonesia, what goal should be striven for, and how  
9 best to attain it. There was agreement about the goal of harmony and church unity, but sore feelings over  
10 what has happened in the past, and a divergence of opinions on the proper and/or best way to achieve the  
11 goal.

12 In the fall of 2017 the GGRI-KB invited the CanRC to send delegates to the provincial synod of the GGRI-  
13 KB. We declined this invitation, indicating that currently our relationship with the GGRI is with the GGRI-  
14 *nasional* and with the GGRI-NTT, and thus we have no mandate to attend a GGRI-KB synod. We also felt  
15 such a visit would not justify the cost it involves, especially since we will be with the GGRI-KB, the Lord  
16 willing, in 2020.

## 17 Observations

### 18 The importance of EF between the CanRC and the GGRI

19 Frequently churches wonder if the CanRC should be into a relationship of EF with a church so far away  
20 from us and so close to our close sister, the FRCA. The reasons why we continue to be drawn into  
21 relationships with Indonesian churches include the following:

- 22 1. The Toronto-Bethel CanRC and the Smithville CanRC have (had) mission fields in Indonesia
- 23 2. Three ministers in Indonesian churches are graduates of CRTS; two of them are married into CanRC  
24 families.
- 25 3. Across Canada many CanRC members are involved with work among impoverished children and  
26 families in Timor and Sumba. Some of this falls under the oversight of Word and Deed.
- 27 4. The GKv are devolving from Indonesia as a mission field. The GGRI are becoming increasingly  
28 concerned the GKv are failing to be faithful churches. As the GGRI are heavily dependent upon  
29 funding from elsewhere, they look to “daughters” of the GKv, the FRCA and CanRC, for help.
- 30 5. On the other hand, the FRCA are situated but 4 hours of flying from the GGRI-NTT. One of their  
31 ministers, Rev. A. VanDelden, teaches (in Indonesian) at the seminary in Sumba. Many local FRCA  
32 and individual FRCA members are involved in projects in Sumba. Indonesian is a second language  
33 taught in the high school. These, and other facts, indicate that our Australian sister churches are far  
34 better positioned than the CanRC to provide the GGRI with meaningful assistance.

35 In short, we recommend that synod observe:

- 36 2. There are many historic and personal ties between the GGRI and the CanRC. Further, like the CanRC,  
37 the GGRI are concerned about developments in the GKv. This implies that the CanRC ought not to  
38 discontinue its relationship of EF with the GGRI. Nevertheless, the geographical and cultural  
39 distance between Canada and Indonesia makes this a challenging relationship to maintain for the  
40 CanRC. It is prudent and proper for the CanRC to maintain this relationship in close consultation  
41 with the FRCA, who are much better positioned to provide whatever assistance the GGRI require.

### 42 Concerns with respect to the GGRI-KB and GGRI-Papua

43 It should be noted that the concerns which the CRCA referenced in its report to GS 2016 are based solely  
44 on concerns expressed by the GGRI-NTT to the CRCA. Further, by way of information, we note that the

---

<sup>11</sup> The general synod in a hotel conference centre, the provincial synod in an open walled church building in a village off the grid – a synod serviced by a 2.5 kW generator to power projectors, laptops, and 4 LED lights. At both synods we were capably helped by various individuals who could speak English.

1 concerns expressed to GS 2016 are not reflected in the Acts of GS 2016 themselves; one needs to turn to  
2 the CRCA report to GS 2016 to find out what they are.

3 **Regarding the GGRI-KB.** In its 2016 report the CRCA indicated that the GGRI-NTT had expressed  
4 “concerns about the [GGRI-KB having] become part of the PGI, which is the Indonesian version of the World  
5 Council of Churches.”<sup>12</sup> This matter was explicitly dealt with at the synod of the GGRI-*nasional*. The GGRI-  
6 KB explained their ties with the PGI and explicitly indicated they would never allow such membership to  
7 compromise their adherence to the Reformed faith.<sup>13</sup> We note that in late 2016 we did not find the GGRI-  
8 KB listed as a PGI member on the PGI website.

9 We recommend that synod observe:

- 10 3. The CRCA has found no evidence that the GGRI-KB is compromising its commitment to the Reformed  
11 faith in its ties to other churches; rather, the CRCA witnessed the GGRI-KB testify that it would not  
12 do so.

13 **Regarding the GGRI-Papua.** In its report the CRCA indicated that the GGRI-NTT had expressed “concerns  
14 about the system of church government in Papua, where they don’t have deputies but a permanent  
15 executive of classes and synods. Is this going into the direction of hierarchy?” The letter of the Toronto-  
16 Bethel CanRC, submitted to GS 2016 and referenced in article 115 recommendation 4.3, explained that,  
17 because of avenues for communicating with the government, “deputies for contact with the government  
18 [have been appointed] of which one particularly [is] appointed as a full-time contact person. However, this  
19 is reviewed at each synod where the man is either reappointed or replaced. He can never work in isolation  
20 as they have their deputy meetings at least twice a year or as often as necessary. It did occur on one occasion  
21 that a man did begin to work in isolation and he was deposed and replaced by the next synod. Thus, there  
22 is no fear of hierarchy. It is important to know the context and culture.”<sup>14</sup> We heard of no concerns with  
23 either the GGRI-NTT or GGRI-KB regarding the polity of the GGRI-Papua at the synod of the GGRI-*nasional*.  
24 The explanation given by Toronto-Bethel was confirmed by members of the GKv who work with the GGRI-  
25 Papua and were delegates to the synod of the GGRI-*nasional*.

26 We recommend that synod observe:

- 27 4. The CRCA has found no evidence that the GGRI-Papua is unreformed in its practice of church polity.  
28 The approach taken by the GGRI-Papua to structure its communication with the government is  
29 Biblical and appropriate in the civil context of the GGRI-Papua.”

30 The synod of the GGRI-*nasional* took due note of the questions the CanRC have and decided as follows

31 ***I. Decision No. 09. SN-GGRI-II/X/2016 Re: Proposal for CanRC to receive the GGRI***  
32 ***as one national federation of sister churches***

33 ***Considerations:***

- 34 1. *In the context of developing a strong sister church relationship because of one*  
35 *faith and doctrine as reformed churches both nationally and abroad therefore*  
36 *the 1st deputies for contact of the GGRI considered the need to develop contact*  
37 *with the CanRC sister churches and to receive GGRI-NTT, GGRI West*  
38 *Kalimantan and GGRI Papua GGRI as one national federation of brothers.*  
39 2. *Shoulder to shoulder, assisting each other, urging one another to preach the*  
40 *Gospel in this world, particularly in Indonesia, where there are still many souls*  
41 *and places which need to be reached with the pure preaching of the Gospel.*  
42 3. *CanRC has established contact with GGRI NTT and tries to understand well GGRI*  
43 *which is in West Kalimantan and Papua.*

---

<sup>12</sup> Report, section G.1, point 4 on page 26 of the printed version.

<sup>13</sup> List of Decisions B. Decision No. 2 and I. Decision No. 9, consideration 4.

<sup>14</sup> The Toronto-Bethel CanRC has served as sending church for mission work in Indonesian Papua for many years, and their missionary Rev. Versteeg (recently retired) continued to remain involved with the GGRI-Papua even after Toronto took on the mission field of Papua New Guinea.

1 4. Membership of GGRI West Kalimantan in the PGI is a membership of a practical  
2 nature related to oneness in the field of governance and does not bind itself to  
3 the doctrines of the said church / organization.

4 5. There is a strong reason/desire for the National GGRI, which also consists of  
5 GGRI West Kalimantan and Papua churches, to become sister churches of  
6 Canada.

7 **Remembering:**

8 The unanimity at the assembly of the 2nd National Synod GGRI, October 18-21,  
9 2016

10 **Observation:**

11 The proposal of the GGRI National Deputies for contact for the period of 2012 –  
12 2016.

13 **Decisions:**

14 1. National GGRI will send a letter to CanRC requesting CanRC to receive the GGRI  
15 as a whole as sister churches.

16 2. The letter will be sent by the moderamen.

17 3. The letter as mentioned in point 1 and 2 will be followed up by or mandated to  
18 the Deputies for Contact of GGRI NTT as the address of the GGRI for all three  
19 regions.<sup>15</sup>

20 The letter can be found at the end of this Indonesia chapter as Appendix A.

21 We recommend that synod observe:

- 22 5. The GGRI, pointing to the harmony and unity at its national synod, requests the CanRC to receive  
23 the GGRI as a whole as sister churches (NS-GGRI 2016 decision 9.1). Further, the GGRI as a whole  
24 has been received by the ICRC as member, and the FRCA and GKv have extended their relationship  
25 of EF to cover the whole GGRI.

26 **Summary of recommended observations**

27 We advise synod to include among its observations:

- 28 1. GS 2016 (art. 115) decided:

29 4.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in  
30 Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT) under the adopted rules;

31 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

32 4.2.1 To discuss our rules for EF with the Committee on Relations of the GGRI and to gather as  
33 much information as is needed to come to a good recommendation to General Synod 2019  
34 regarding a relationship of EF with the GGRI;

35 4.2.2 To gather and evaluate information regarding the GGRI-KalBar and the GGRI-Papua in  
36 order to prepare a proposal as to how to deal with the GGRI as a national federation instead  
37 of dealing exclusively with the GGRI-NTT, which has become part of this larger federation of  
38 churches;

39 4.2.3 To try to ensure that a delegation of two brothers is sent to Indonesia to represent the  
40 CanRC at a synod of the GGRI;

41 4.2.4 To work in consultation and cooperation with the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches  
42 of Australia (FRCA) to encourage and support the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow  
43 in the Reformed doctrine and church polity;

44 4.2.5 To encourage the GGRI to seek cooperation with the Reformed Theological School in  
45 Kupang (established by Smithville);

46 4.2.6 To encourage the GGRI to seek closer contact and cooperation with the Calvinist Reformed

---

<sup>15</sup> Translation by Rev. H. Versteeg.

1 Churches (GGRC) and to monitor the progress of the dialogue between the GGRI and the  
2 GGRC.

3 4.3 To pass on the letter of the Toronto-Bethel CanRC to the CRCA for consideration.

- 4 2. There are many historic and personal ties between the GGRI and the CanRC. Further, like the CanRC,  
5 the GGRI are concerned about developments in the GKv. This implies that the CanRC ought not to  
6 discontinue its relationship of EF with the GGRI. Nevertheless, the geographical and cultural  
7 distance between Canada and Indonesia makes this a cumbersome relationship to maintain for the  
8 CanRC. It is prudent and proper for the CanRC to maintain this relationship in close consultation  
9 with the FRCA, who are much better positioned to provide whatever assistance the GGRI require.
- 10 3. The CRCA has found no evidence that the GGRI-KB is compromising its commitment to the Reformed  
11 faith; rather, the CRCA witnessed the GGRI-KB testify that it would not do so.
- 12 4. The CRCA has found no evidence that the GGRI-Papua is unreformed in its practice of church polity.  
13 The approach taken by the GGRI-Papua to structure its communication with the government is  
14 Biblical and appropriate in the civil context of the GGRI-Papua.
- 15 5. The GGRI, pointing to the harmony and unity at its national synod, requests the CanRC to receive  
16 the GGRI as a whole as sister churches (NS-GGRI-2016 decision 9.1). Further, the GGRI as a whole  
17 has been received by the ICRC as member, and the FRCA and GKv have extended their relationship  
18 of EF to cover the whole GGRI.

### 19 **Considerations**

20 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 21 1. With thankfulness to the Lord, the GGRI evidences in confession and practice to be a church seeking  
22 to serve the Lord according to His Word.
- 23 2. There is sufficient reason to continue EF with the GGRI, and to extend EF to the GGRI as a whole.
- 24 3. The GGRI, as a federation of federations, could prove to be an effective vehicle to foster church unity  
25 among the various groups of Reformed churches in Indonesia.

### 26 **Recommendations**

27 We recommend that synod decide:

- 28 1. To continue EF with the Reformed Churches Indonesia (GGRI) as a whole, being the federations of  
29 the churches in Kalimantan Barat (GGRI-KB), the churches in Nusa Tenggara Timur (GGRI-NTT), and  
30 the churches in Papua (GGRI-Papua);
- 31 2. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
- 32 2.1 To try to ensure that a delegation of two brothers is sent to Indonesia to represent the CanRC  
33 at the next national synod of the GGRI, planned for 2020;
- 34 2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)  
35 as they encourage and support the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in Reformed  
36 doctrine and polity;
- 37 2.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in  
38 Timor;
- 39 2.4 To encourage the GGRI to foster and promote church unity among Reformed churches in  
40 Indonesia;
- 41 2.5 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.
- 42
- 43

1 **GGRC: History of the Relationship**

2 GS 1998: Mention is made of Indonesian churches in the context of the ICRC and FRCA.

3 GS 2001 (art. 54):

4 **2. Observations**

5 2.1. *The CRCA informs Synod in an appendix dated March 9, 2001 about a request from the GGRM to*  
6 *have a “contact relationship” with the CanRC.*

7 **4. Recommendations**

8 *Synod decide to present the CRCA with the following mandate in connection with the GGRM:*

9 4.1. *To gather more information about the GGRM.*

10 4.2. *To consult with the GKN and the FRCA regarding the GGRM.*

11 4.3. *To inform the GGRM of our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship and ask if they can live in a*  
12 *relationship with those rules.*

13 4.4. *To discuss with representatives of the GGRM how they envision a relationship between two*  
14 *federations so far apart geographically can be meaningful, also reminding them that the FRCA*  
15 *should have the primary contact with the GGRM.*

16 4.5. *To come with recommendations to the next Synod.*

17 GS 2004 (art. 100): No EF yet with the GGRC as they are not sufficiently known to the CanRC.

18 GS 2007 (art. 150):

19 **5 Recommendation**

20 5.2 *To delay entering into a sister church relationship until:*

21 5.2.1 *Proper consultation with other churches in ecclesiastical fellowship has taken place according*  
22 *to Rule #3.*

23 5.2.2 *The reasons why the FRCA have not as yet entered into ecclesiastical fellowship are understood*  
24 *and evaluated.*

25 5.3.3 *It is clear that there are no obstacles to entering into ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRC.*

26 GS 2010 (art. 108):

27 **4. Recommendation**

28 4.1 *To not at this time offer a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship to the CRCI.*

29 4.2 *To mandate the CRCA to continue contact with the CRCI with a view to improving official*  
30 *communications and to gain more insight in the character and direction of the CRCI.*

31 4.3 *To acknowledge that unity between the CRCI and the RCI should not be a prerequisite for*  
32 *ecclesiastical fellowship with either of these church federations.*

33 4.4 *To accept the invitation of the RCI to enter into a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship.*

34 4.5 *To maintain the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship under the adopted rules.*

35 4.6 *To mandate the CRCA:*

36 4.6.1 *To monitor the progress of dialogue between the RCI and the CRCI and where possible to*  
37 *continue to promote unity efforts between the CRCI and the RCI.*

38 4.6.2 *To work in consultation with the FRCA, receiving their reports and any other information that*  
39 *would be helpful in assessing the ecclesiastical situation of these churches.*

40 4.6.3 *If necessary, to send Dr. Pol and Rev. Souman to visit the CRCI and to combine this with a visit*  
41 *to a General Synod of the RCI.*

42 GS 2013 (art. 124):

43 **4. Recommendation**

44 4.1 *At this time not to offer a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship to the GGRC, but to work toward*  
45 *that goal;*

46 4.2 *To note with gratitude to the Lord that the work of the Canadian Reformed Churches has borne*  
47 *fruit, also in the reconciliation that could take place between the GGRC and the GGRM.*

48 4.4 *To mandate the CRCA:*

1 4.4.1 To continue contact with the GGRC to encourage these churches to be faithful to the Reformed  
2 doctrine and church order;

3 4.4.2 When possible to send someone from or delegated by the CRCA to help and encourage these  
4 churches to grow in Reformed character, giving priority to finding out what obstacles the GGRC  
5 are experiencing in understanding and implementing the articles of the Reformed Church Order  
6 and how to help the GGRC to remedy the situation;

7 4.4.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the deputies of the FRCA, with the church of  
8 Smithville and the church of Edmonton (Immanuel), and as much as possible and desirable with  
9 other organizations involved in the work among the Reformed churches in the province of NTT;

10 4.4.4 To encourage the GGRC to make use of the Reformed Theological School in Kupang  
11 (established by the church in Smithville) for the training for the ministry in their churches.

### 12 **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

13 GS 2016 (art. 116) decided:

14 4.1 At this time not to accept the offer of the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRC) to enter  
15 into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);

16 4.2 To mandate the CRCA:

17 4.2.1 To continue contact with the GGRC to encourage these churches to be faithful to the Reformed  
18 doctrine and church order;

19 4.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC and the deputies of the  
20 Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA);

21 4.2.3 To encourage the GGRC to make use of the Reformed Theological School in Kupang  
22 (established by the Smithville CanRC) for the training for the ministry in their churches.

### 23 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018**

24 The CRCA has maintained contact with the GGRC through the inter-synods period. Communication has  
25 been primarily via email, sometimes with a view to organizing meetings, sometimes with a view to  
26 discussing matters impacting our relationship.

27 The triennial synod of the GGRC was held in the summer immediately following GS-CanRC 2016  
28 (Dunnville). At that time the CRCA, with half of its members new, was still getting itself organized. It was  
29 clear that the CRCA would be sending a delegation to Indonesia in October, 2016, to visit the GGRI.  
30 Consideration was given to visiting the GGRC during that trip also, but time frames did not allow for this.  
31 The two CanRC delegates to the GGRI synod, Rev. R.C. Janssen and br. O. Bouwman, did meet for an evening  
32 with four delegates from the GGRC to the GGRI synod, being Rev. Yawan Bunga, Rev. Stefen, Rev. Eki, and  
33 br. Soleman Dethan.

34 In 2017 the CanRC delegates met with the GGRC delegate, Rev. Yonson Dethan, to the ICRC. As the ICRC  
35 was in Jordan, close to Smithville, the CRCA hosted a meeting to which were invited the GGRC, the GGRI,  
36 the URCNA, the GKv, the FRCA, and the Smithville CanRC (Timor Mission Board). All were represented at  
37 this meeting, the FRCA via a Skype connection. At this meeting each party outlined their impression of the  
38 situation of Reformed churches in Indonesia, what goal should be striven for, and how best to attain it.  
39 There was agreement about the goal of harmony and church unity. Regretfully, there are sore feelings over  
40 what has happened in the past and a divergence of opinions on the proper and/or best way to achieve the  
41 goal.

42 In August 2018 Rev. R.C. Janssen travelled to Indonesia to visit the GGRC. While there was no synod, the  
43 two classes within the GGRC were to meet during this period (it being the best time of the year to travel).  
44 Rev. Janssen attended Classis Rote for the full length and was present for the opening session of Classis  
45 Savu-Timor. Besides observing proceedings at these ecclesiastical assemblies, he met with GGRC deputies,  
46 and made use of various opportunities to preach and teach. He taught at STAKRI and met with leaders of  
47 the GGRI-Timor. He also met with the minister of the GGRI-NTT in Kupang.

1 **Observations**

2 **The importance of EF between the CanRC and the GGRC**

3 Beyond the boundaries of Indonesia, the GGRC have EF with the GKv and the URCNA. They eagerly long  
4 for EF with the CanRC.

5 Frequently churches wonder if the CanRC should be into a relationship of EF with a church so far away  
6 from us and so close to our close sister, the FRCA. The reasons why we continue to be drawn into  
7 relationships with Indonesian churches include the following:

- 8 1. The Toronto-Bethel CanRC and the Smithville CanRC have (had) mission fields in Indonesia
- 9 2. Three ministers in Indonesian churches are graduates of CRTS; two of them are married into CanRC  
10 families.
- 11 3. Across Canada many CanRC members are involved with work among impoverished children and  
12 families in Timor and Sumba. Work that involves the GGRC falls under the oversight of Word and  
13 Deed.
- 14 4. The GGRC are self-sufficient as churches. However, they consider themselves weak in areas of  
15 Reformed doctrine and practice and seek assistance here. For them, the “natural go-tos” are the  
16 FRCA and CanRC. The GGRC have not had much assistance from the GKv over the years, in spite of  
17 the relationship of EF they have with the GKv. At this point in time they share the concerns the  
18 CanRC have with respect to the GKv.
- 19 5. The FRCA are situated but 5 hours of flying from the GGRC.<sup>16</sup> One of their ministers, Rev. A.  
20 VanDelden, teaches (in Indonesian) at the GGRI seminary in Sumba. Many local FRCA and individual  
21 FRCA members are involved in projects in Sumba and Savu and are reaching out now also to Timor  
22 and Rote. Indonesian is a second language taught in the high school. These, and other factors,  
23 indicate that our Australian sisters are far better positioned than the CanRC to provide the GGRC  
24 with meaningful assistance. However, the FRCA has a policy of only recognizing one church  
25 federation as sister church in any one country and thus, unless that policy changes or the GGRC  
26 unites with the GGRI, the FRCA currently does not recognize the GGRC as a sister church.  
27 Nevertheless, the FRCA does invite the GGRC to FRCA synods, and will send delegates to GGRC  
28 synods. The CanRC explicitly decided at GS 2010: “To acknowledge that unity between the CRCI  
29 [=GGRC] and the RCI [=GGRI] should not be a prerequisite for ecclesiastical fellowship with either  
30 of these church federations.”

31 In short, we recommend that synod observe:

- 32 2. There are many historic and personal ties between the GGRC and the CanRC. Further, like the CanRC,  
33 the GGRC are concerned about developments in the GKv. Finally, they seek assistance from the  
34 CanRC in being Reformed in doctrine and practice and consider an EF relationship to foster this.  
35 This implies that the CanRC ought not to reject entering into a relationship of EF with the GGRC.  
36 Nevertheless, the geographical and cultural distance between Canada and Indonesia makes this a  
37 cumbersome relationship to maintain for the CanRC. It is prudent and proper for the CanRC to  
38 consult closely the FRCA, who are much better positioned to provide whatever assistance the GGRC  
39 require.
- 40 3. The FRCA, given its current policy of one church in one country, has not entered into EF with the  
41 GGRC. The CanRC does not have this policy. Further, the URCNA already enjoys EF with the GGRC.  
42 It is more advisable for the CanRC to grant than to refuse the GGRC’s request for EF.

43 **GGRC and church unity**

44 The GGRC is a church federation that has existed for many decades. It became reformed in character  
45 due to its exposure to GKv missionaries. One of these missionaries taught at the seminary of the GGRI-NTT

---

<sup>16</sup> And once Kupang’s airport becomes truly international again, it’s even less – Kupang is within an hour flying from Darwin, Australia.

1 and is now serving in the CanRC. As some of the ministers in the GGRC were educated in the GGRI-NTT, the  
2 GGRI and GGRC enjoy a sister church relationship. The fact that the GGRC and GGRI are for the most part  
3 on different islands makes 'simple' things like pulpit exchanges costly and time consuming.

4 The GGRC is eager to pursue church unity. They feel, however, that in this pursuit especially non-  
5 Indonesians regard them as less than equal. They note:

- 6 • The GKv is heavily involved with the GGRI, minimally with the GGRC.
- 7 • The FRCA have EF with the GGRI and therefore have no EF with the GGRC.
- 8 • The CanRC have EF with the GGRI and not with the GGRC. Moreover, the Smithville CanRC has  
9 established a mission project that operates in part within the "catchment" of the GGRC, yet  
10 churches that come from this project did not join the GGRC as was indicated to be the  
11 intention, in 2003, 2004, and again in 2012.

12 Recognizing that Indonesia is an honour-shame culture, the CRCA understands that this state of affairs  
13 deeply grieves the GGRC and frustrates them. The GGRC feel that they have been done wrongly by the  
14 CanRC, as Smithville repeatedly indicated that churches produced by Mission Timor would become part of  
15 the GGRC, and now these churches have formed the GGRI-Timor and are seeking to join the GGRI. The GGRC  
16 feel bypassed and they do not understand why this is. They acknowledge they are not perfect, they present  
17 themselves as teachable, and they strive with great zeal to be Reformed and to share the Gospel in their  
18 communities at great expense to themselves. The GGRC have EF with the URCNA and are using their  
19 relationship to encourage the URCNA to enter into EF also with the GGRI.

20 GS-CanRC 2010 determined that lack of unity between the GGRI and GGRC should not be a prerequisite  
21 for EF with either of them. The CRCA is of the impression that having EF with the GGRI and not with the  
22 GGRC is creating a stumbling block for the GGRC to unite with the GGRI, and for the GGRI-Timor to join with  
23 the GGRC. The CRCA believes that, in the Indonesian situation, it is unwise to treat differently those whom  
24 the CanRC feel should be united. All other things being equal (and the findings of the CRCA suggest they  
25 are): if the CanRC maintain EF with the GGRI, they should also enter into EF with the GGRC.

26 Individuals in the GGRI-Timor and the GGRI-NTT were unsure whether EF between the GGRC and CanRC  
27 is wise; they felt it might legitimize the independent existence of the GGRC and thus thwart the drive  
28 towards church unity. Individuals in the GGRC are of a different opinion. The CRCA believes that not entering  
29 into EF with the GGRC while maintaining it with the GGRI is more likely to thwart the process towards unity  
30 than having EF with both GGRI and GGRC. Indeed, having EF with both the GGRI and GGRC will give the  
31 CanRC more credibility and authority when encouraging the two to cooperate and unite.

32 Moreover, the CRCA believes that as CanRC we need to recognize that, like Canada, Indonesia is  
33 multicultural. There is no expectation on our part that, for example, the ERQ and the CanRC will ever  
34 become one federation: our histories and cultures are too divergent. Given the cultural barriers between  
35 Indonesia and Canada and given our minimal understanding of the cultural diversity within Indonesia, as  
36 Canadians we should be careful about encouraging Indonesian churches to a strict following of our own  
37 preferred practises of governance. They are to adhere to biblical principles but "on minor points of Church  
38 Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected." (CO article 50).

39 Finally, again by way of comparison, the CanRC and URCNA have been pursuing unity for over twenty  
40 years now. The fact that unity has not been realized is not an indication that either church is unfaithful to  
41 the Lord's command. The same is true for the churches in Indonesia. The churches do their best in a country  
42 which presents geographical challenges. Their context is an honour-shame culture, implying that manners  
43 of communicating and relating are different from our innocence-guilt culture.

44 We recommend that synod observe: "The GGRC earnestly strives for unity with other Reformed  
45 churches. Entering into EF with the GGRC is more likely to further this striving, as opposed to thwarting it.  
46 As Canadians we need to be sensitive to the environment and circumstances in which Indonesian churches  
47 find themselves (cf. CO article 50)."

1 **Summary of recommended observations**

2 We advise synod to include among its observations:

3 1. GS 2016 (art. 116) decided:

4 4.1 *At this time not to accept the offer of the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRC) to*  
5 *enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);*

6 4.2 *To mandate the CRCA:*

7 4.2.1 *To continue contact with the GGRC to encourage these churches to be faithful to the*  
8 *Reformed doctrine and church order;*

9 4.2.2 *To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC and the deputies of the*  
10 *Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA);*

11 4.2.3 *To encourage the GGRC to make use of the Reformed Theological School in Kupang*  
12 *(established by the Smithville CanRC) for the training for the ministry in their churches.*

13 2. There are many historic and personal ties between the GGRC and the CanRC. Further, like the CanRC,  
14 the GGRC are concerned about developments in the GkV. Finally, they seek assistance from the  
15 CanRC in being Reformed in doctrine and practice and consider an EF relationship to foster this.  
16 This implies that the CanRC ought not to reject entering into a relationship of EF with the GGRC.  
17 Nevertheless, the geographical and cultural distance between Canada and Indonesia makes this a  
18 cumbersome relationship to maintain for the CanRC. It is prudent and proper for the CanRC to  
19 consult closely with the FRCA, who are much better positioned to provide whatever assistance the  
20 GGRC require.

21 3. The FRCA, given its current policy of one church in one country, has not entered into EF with the  
22 GGRC. The CanRC does not have this policy. Further, the URCNA already enjoys EF with the GGRC.  
23 It is more advisable for the CanRC to grant than to refuse the GGRC's request for EF.

24 4. The GGRC earnestly strives for unity with other Reformed churches. Entering into EF with the GGRC  
25 is more likely to further this striving, as opposed to thwarting it. As Canadians we need to be  
26 sensitive to the environment and circumstances in which Indonesian churches find themselves (cf.  
27 CO article 50).

28 **Considerations**

29 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

30 1. With thankfulness to the Lord, the GGRC evidences in confession and practice to be churches seeking  
31 to serve the Lord according to His Word

32 2. There is sufficient reason, considering eighteen years of contact, to enter into EF with the GGRC

33 3. Entering into EF with the GGRC acknowledges the history and legitimacy of this federation of  
34 churches. A sister church relationship between the GGRC and CanRC will allow them to address  
35 each other with respect to matters that pertain to doctrine, worship, and governance, also where  
36 church unity is concerned.

37 **Recommendations**

38 We recommend that synod decide:

39 1. To enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Calvinist Reformed Churches [in Indonesia]  
40 (GGRC);

41 2. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

42 2.1 To send a delegation to the next synod of the GGRC, planned for 2019, informing them of this  
43 decision;

44 2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)  
45 and United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) as they encourage and support the  
46 churches of the GGRC in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;

47 2.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in  
48 Timor;

1 2.4 To encourage the GGRC to foster and promote church unity among Reformed churches in  
2 Indonesia;

3 2.6 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### 4 **Other matters pertaining to Indonesia**

5 With respect to both the GGRI and GGRC, GS 2016 mandated the CRCA to encourage both to make use  
6 of the Reformed Theological School in Kupang (established by Smithville) (GS 2016 art. 115 dec. 4.2.5 and  
7 art. 116 dec. 4.2.3). This school is usually referred to by its Indonesian acronym STAKRI. In what follows we  
8 report on this matter. However, first we touch on the matter of the formation of the GGRI-Timor in 2016,  
9 the fruit of Timor Mission, the project of the Smithville CanRC.

10 We are not sure whether the two matters addressed below are best dealt with in one synod decision or  
11 two. The two are closely connected, but the first relates to a new mandate regarding a church federation  
12 while the second relates to a general mandate regarding all churches in Indonesia, with implications for our  
13 relationship with all churches abroad.

#### 14 **Mission Timor – Smithville CanRC**

15 In a letter dd. April 9, 2018, the Smithville CanRC requested the CRCA “[to] investigate this fledgling  
16 federation, GGRI-Timor, with a view to establishing a sister church relationship with them.” The Smithville  
17 CanRC has been encouraging and hoping that the mission churches would have joined themselves to the  
18 GGRC, but this has not occurred. Smithville informed us that it maintained that as ‘autonomous’ churches  
19 in their own right, the Timorese congregations had the right of self-determination and direction. The GGRI-  
20 Timor, so we were informed, consists of nine churches. In a letter dd August 4, 2018, the Timor Mission  
21 Board informed the CRCA that the GGRI-Timor will be endeavouring to join the GGRI-*nasional*.

22 In response, the CRCA notes that GS 2013 maintained the decision that a relationship of EF should be  
23 investigated only upon a proposal having gone the so-called “way of the church order”.<sup>17</sup> Thus the CRCA  
24 was not sure whether its mandate allows an investigation as requested by the Smithville CanRC. We have,  
25 of course, as opportunity arose, kept ourselves informed regarding what is now the GGRI-Timor as we have  
26 been mandated to be in touch with the Smithville CanRC. In 2018 our delegate also met with members of  
27 the GGRI-Timor at the STAKRI campus. However, the question remains whether Smithville’s request can  
28 come to the CRCA directly from the Smithville CanRC or should come to the CRCA from general synod with  
29 the request having gone the “way of the church order”.

30 If synod is convinced it should mandate the CRCA in this matter, we recommend that synod observe,  
31 consider and decide as follows:

32 **Observation:** The Smithville CanRC requests that the CRCA be mandated to investigate the GGRI-Timor  
33 with a view to establishing EF with them. The GGRI-Timor are a fruit of the mission work of the  
34 Smithville CanRC in Timor and, at the time of the request, consisted of 9 churches.

35 **Consideration:** The newly formed GGRI-Timor are in a sense daughters of the CanRC and receive direct  
36 assistance from some CanRC through mission work. It is appropriate for the CanRC to establish  
37 closer ties with the GGRI-Timor.

38 **Decision:** To mandate the CRCA

- 39 1. To maintain contact with the Reformed Churches in Timor (GGRI-Timor);
- 40 2. To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

#### 41 **STAKRI**

42 *Parenthetical note. There has been some confusion over whether the GGRC has its own*  
43 *Theological School in Kupang. There is a high school operated by Children of Light, an organization*  
44 *associated with the GGRC, that is at times referred to as a “theological school”. We in North America*  
45 *would refer to it as a Christian School as this is a secondary education institution. STAKRI, associated*  
46 *with the GGRI-Timor, is a post-secondary education institution. Students from the Children of Light*

---

<sup>17</sup> GS 2007, art. 160, cons. 3.3; GS 2013 article 81, cons. 3.1 and rec. 4; GS 2013 art. 175, cons. 3.2.

1           *“theological school” at times will pursue further education at STAKRI (mostly with a view to*  
2           *becoming teachers).*

3           The CRCA has discussed use by the GGRI of STAKRI with the GGRI. Regarding theological training, the  
4 GGRI decided in 2012 to move towards a single centre of training. This proved impractical, especially for  
5 financial reasons, and so GS-GGRI 2016 decided on two centres of training: the existing schools in  
6 Kalimantan Barat and on Sumba Island. The training in Sumba receives financial and teaching support from  
7 the FRCA and GKv, the training in Kalimantan Barat from the GKv. The GGRI-NTT (with involvement of the  
8 FRCA) have made use of STAKRI in the past but were very unhappy with their experience. In 2016 they were  
9 not convinced that STAKRI is properly accredited. The Timor Mission Board informed the CRCA in October  
10 2018 that this matter has been resolved with the GGRI-NTT and FRCA.

11           The CRCA has also discussed use by the GGRC of STAKRI with the GGRC and with STAKRI. Initially the  
12 GGRC were closely involved with STAKRI, both in supplying teaching staff and theological students. Like the  
13 GGRI-NTT, the GGRC expressed doubt, with documentation, about the accreditation of STAKRI. Upon  
14 investigation, involving consultation with the Smithville CanRC and STAKRI, the following has become clear.

- 15           1. STAKRI is two schools in one campus: a teacher’s college and a theological seminary.
- 16           2. The school as an institution is accredited with an operational license.
- 17           3. The teacher’s college is accredited as degree granting by a government supervised agency. This  
18           means graduating students are allowed to teach in the public education system.
- 19           4. The theological seminary has an operational license. STAKRI has investigated further accreditation  
20           but considers it unnecessary as graduates will serve in the churches and considers it unwise as  
21           government influence will broaden the spectrum of subjects taught substantially beyond theology.

22           We indicated to the GGRI, to the GGRC, and to the FRCA that any grievances they have with STAKRI  
23 should be addressed to STAKRI and its board, and to the Smithville CanRC, as we understood STAKRI to fall  
24 under Smithville’s responsibility. We later became aware that the Smithville CanRC has no direct supervision  
25 over STAKRI: it is a school under the supervision of a church or churches in Timor.

26           Over the course of the past three years the CRCA has begun to doubt the appropriateness of the  
27 mandate to encourage cooperation with or use of STAKRI. Our doubts are based on the following:

- 28           1. Our rules for EF make no reference to seminary training. The how of seminary training is an internal  
29           matter for a sister church: the “how” of seminary training falls under “minor points of Church Order  
30           and ecclesiastical practice” (Church Order article 50). This casts doubt upon the appropriateness of  
31           mandating the CRCA to encourage a church with which the CanRC is in EF to seek cooperation with  
32           or use a particular seminary.
- 33           2. The mandate seems to assume direct Smithville CanRC involvement in STAKRI. However, there is no  
34           such direct involvement in the operation of STAKRI. STAKRI is operated by the GGRI-Timor.
- 35           3. The mandate seems to flow out of the assumption that STAKRI is better or more properly accredited  
36           than the seminary of the GGRI-NTT or other theological schools. This has been disputed in  
37           ecclesiastical circles in the past three years. Besides, accreditation is not necessary to train young  
38           men to be ministers in the churches.
- 39           4. The GGRI have their own seminary training, in Sumba and Kalimantan Barat. The seminary of the  
40           GGRI-NTT receives financial and staffing support from the FRCA.
- 41           5. The GGRC would like to use STAKRI but, given their experience with STAKRI, are hesitant to do so.  
42           However, they are not opposed to it, and one of the GGRC ministers teaches at STAKRI. Currently  
43           some GGRC students attend SALEM, a seminary in Malang (<http://sttsalem.org>). SALEM has  
44           connections to our sister church in Korea, the KPCK. Further, in their report to GS-FRCA 2018 (Synod  
45           Bunbury) the FRCA deputyship on Indonesia reported they fund 2-3 gifted GGRI-NTT students a  
46           year to study at SALEM. Students are also free to study elsewhere. Ecclesiastical assemblies of the  
47           GGRC examine students before they are admitted to the ministry.
- 48           6. Attempts were made by various parties to draw the CRCA into concerns with respect to STAKRI.

1 CRCA members have spent much time and energy seeking to understand what exactly the issues  
2 are, and why they exist. Such clarity is simply not to be had, because of the foreign civil structures,  
3 the foreign academic structures, and the foreign culture and language.

4 The CRCA is thus of the opinion that this mandate should not be continued explicitly.

5 We recommend that synod observe, consider, and decide as follows:

6 **Observations:**

- 7 1. Seminary training is an internal matter not regulated by Rules for EF; it belongs to the “minor  
8 points of church order and practice for which churches abroad shall not be rejected” (CO article  
9 50).
- 10 2. Both the GGRI and GGRC supervise their students of theology and have ecclesiastical examination  
11 procedures that guard the pulpit against heresy.
- 12 3. Accreditation of a seminary is not essential to solid and proper theological training. Moreover, it  
13 is not clear that STAKRI is accredited in the way considerations of GS 2013 and GS 2016 may  
14 suggest.
- 15 4. STAKRI is neither directly nor indirectly under the supervision of the CanRC.

16 **Consideration:** It is not proper for the CanRC to encourage churches in Indonesia to use or cooperate  
17 with STAKRI for their theological training.

18 **Decision:** No longer to encourage churches in Indonesia to use or cooperate with a particular seminary  
19 for their theological training.

20

1  
2

**Appendix A – Letter from the GGRI to the CanRC**

REFORMED CHURCHES IN INDONESIA  
THE SECOND NATIONAL SYNOD, HELD ON OCTOBER 18-21 2016 IN  
WAINGAPU, EAST NUSA TENGGARA-INDONESIA

---

Waingapu, October 21,2016

To the CRCA of Canadian Reformed Churches  
c/o. Rev. Carlo Jansen and brother Otto Bouman

Eesteemed brothers

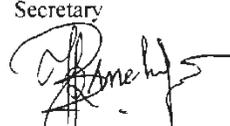
First of all, Reformed Churches in Indonesia greet you in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who has given us the previllige to be His chosen people. We are thankful to the Lord who has made us as sister churches. We are also thankful that you sent the Rev. Carlo Jansen and brother Otto Bouman to attend our Second National Synod. It is our wish and hope that we may visit each other's synod in order for us to grow in good understanding of each other.

At our first National Synod held in February 2012 in Papua, Reformed Churches in three places: Papua, East Nusa Tenggara and West Kalimantan became one federaton. Our National Synod is held every four years. At our Second National Synod in 2016 we also dealt with one item regarding our relationship as one federation of Reformed Churches in Indonesia. You have accepted Reformed Churches in East Nusa Tenggara as your sister churches. Now that we are one federation of Reformed Churches in Indonesia, we decided to propose to Canadian Reformed Churches in order that we may be accepted as a whole federation, not only the churches in East Nusa Tenggara. Therefore, through this letter the Reformed Churches in Indonesia come to you with the hope that you may extend your relationship with Papua and West Kalimantan.

Finally, we thank you for taking time to deal with this proposal. May our Gracious God and Father continue to surround us with His love and care and may He make as a foot and a hand to each other.

Yours in Christ

Chairman  
  
Rev. Pila Njuka  


Secretary  
  
Balla Rihi Meha

3  
4

## **Korea (KPCK, RCK, IRCK)**

For statistics and further general information see the summary of the report.

### **KCPK: History of the Relationship**

GS 1971 (art. 47.6): It is decided to thank the KPCK for their letter and to investigate whether there would be any obstacles to entering into correspondence with the KPCK.

GS 1974 (art. 140 F.2b): It is decided to continue contact with the KPCK.

GS 1977 (art. 108): It is decided to refrain from entering into correspondence with the KPCK but rather to try and intensify contact.

GS 1980 (art. 153): It is decided to refrain from entering into correspondence with the KPCK. Further the CRCA is mandated to evaluate the KPCK church government and the feasibility of entering into correspondence.

GS 1983 (art. 105): It is decided to further investigate the KPCK church government and confessional divergences (from the CanRC).

GS 1986 (art. 150): It is decided that due to the language barrier a correspondence relationship with the KPCK cannot be established at this time.

GS 1989 (art. 103): No change.

GS 1992 (art. 111): It is decided to accept the KPCK request for EF. [The arrival of Dr. N.H. Gootjes made communication possible.]

GS 1995 (art. 101 II) and GS 1998 (art. 120 V.A): It is decided to continue EF with the KPCK.

GS 2001 (art. 36): It is decided to continue EF with the KPCK but also to discuss questions of divergences.

GS 2004 (art. 59): It is decided to continue EF with the KPCK but also to discuss questions of divergences.

GS 2007 (art. 86): It is decided to continue EF with the KPCK and to reach out to sister churches to work together in visiting the KPCK General Assembly.

GS 2010 (art. 105): It is decided to continue EF with the KPCK and to work cooperatively with the GKv and the FRCA in visiting the KPCK General Assembly.

GS 2013 (art. 155): Same decision as in 2010.

### **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

GS 2016 (art. 81) decided:

*4.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) under the adopted rules;*

*4.2 To continue to work cooperatively with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) in exercising our relationship with the KPCK in meaningful ways and continue to visit the annual General Assembly in turn;*

*4.3 To maintain regular communication with the KPCK as well as meet with their delegates at the 2017 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).*

### **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018**

1. Rev. S.C. Van Dam and Jerome Lee (elder in the Surrey-Maranatha CanRC, BC), for whom Korean is his native language, visited the KPCK General Assembly in September 2017. Rev. Van Dam brought greetings on behalf of the CanRC to the KPCK at this GA.

2. The material for the GA-KPCK 2017 was reviewed by Jerome Lee. He prepared a summary of the contents. From these contents we could ascertain that the KPCK desires to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ.

3. A meeting was held between our delegates, the KPCK foreign relations committee, Rev. Dr. Sarel Van der Walt (delegate from the GKSA) as well as br. Arjan Glashuis (delegate from the GKv). At this meeting the matter of the GKv decision to open the offices to women as well as recent developments in the KPCK were discussed.

4. An extensive meeting was held between our delegates, the KPCK foreign relations committee (which

1 had changed somewhat in composition from the previous day), Rev. Dr. Sarel Van der Walt and  
2 representatives from the KPCK in North America. The main topic of discussion was how to respond to the  
3 GKv decision to open the offices to women. Our delegates had a good opportunity to make known our  
4 serious objections to this decision. These concerns were echoed by the other delegates and were well  
5 received by the KPCK foreign relations committee members. It is hoped that we will be able to share  
6 resources in the future about this topic.

7 5. Rev. Van Dam gave an interview with the KPCK newspaper. They were especially interested in hearing  
8 about church life in the CanRC and in our view of the recent GKv decision regarding women in office.

9 6. Some correspondence (invitations) was exchanged.

10 7. An article reporting the visit to South Korea was published in *Clarion* (vol 66, pp. 721-726).

11 8. There was some interaction between the CanRC delegates and the KPCK delegates at the ICRC held in  
12 Jordan, Ontario in July 2017.

### 13 **Observations**

14 We advise synod to include among its observations:

15 1. GS 2016 (art. 81) decided:

16 4.1 *To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK)*  
17 *under the adopted rules;*

18 4.2 *To continue to work cooperatively with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) and*  
19 *the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) in exercising our relationship with the KPCK in*  
20 *meaningful ways and continue to visit the annual General Assembly in turn;*

21 4.3 *To maintain regular communication with the KPCK as well as meet with their delegates at the*  
22 *2017 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).*

23 2. EF with the KPCK is maintained since they are a faithful church of Jesus Christ.

24 a) With increased globalization, it is good to have interaction with them to support each other as  
25 South Korea is rapidly becoming secularized.

26 b) We have opportunity to have some impact for good. The KPCK is a very large federation and we  
27 learned that there are some ministers in the KPCK who thought that the GKv decision to open  
28 up the offices to women would be worth investigating for their own situation. To be able to  
29 clearly state our reasons for disagreeing with the GKv decision was beneficial in this context.

30 3. GA-KPCK 2018 will be responding to the GKv decision to open the offices to women.

31 4. The cooperation with the other churches (GKv and FRCA) in visiting the GA-KPCK in turn works well.

### 32 **Considerations**

33 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

34 1. It is good and beneficial to maintain EF with the KPCK for the reasons outlined in observation 2.

35 2. It is desirable to monitor how the KPCK responds to the GKv decision to open the offices to women,  
36 in line with Rule 2 of the rules for EF.

### 37 **Recommendations**

38 We recommend that synod decide:

39 1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of  
40 Korea (KPCK) under the adopted rules;

41 2. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

42 2.1 To continue to work cooperatively with sister churches who have relations with the KPCK in  
43 exercising our relationship with the KPCK in meaningful ways and to visit the annual General  
44 Assembly in turn;

45 2.2 To maintain regular communication with the KPCK as well as meet with their delegates at the  
46 2021 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC);

47 2.3 To monitor the KPCK response to the GKv decision to allow women in all offices;

48 2.4 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

1 **IRCK: History of the Relationship**

2 GS 2007 (art. 127): It is decided not to accept the IRCK's request for EF.

3 GS 2010 (art. 105): It is decided to learn more about the IRCK through the KPCK.

4 GS 2013 (art. 155): same decision as in 2010. GS 2013 (art. 157): It is decided to thank the IRCK for their  
5 interaction and encourage them to seek contact with the KPCK and the RCK.

6 **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

7 GS 2016 (art. 107) decided:

8 *4.1 To encourage the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to continue contact with*  
9 *the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK) where possible.*

10 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018**

11 1. Rev. S.C. Van Dam and Elder Jerome Lee visited the IRCK Theological Academy in Anyang (a city in the  
12 greater Seoul area). At the invitation of Rev. Heon Soo Kim, he gave a lecture on the theme of father in the  
13 early chapters of Jeremiah. This was well received and led to upbuilding conversation and fellowship.

14 2. We learned from Rev. Kim that the IRCK are not seeking EF with the CanRC due to a shortage of man  
15 power from their side.

16 3. The IRCK is actively involved in publishing Reformed materials, including translations of CanRC authors  
17 (e.g. Dr. Van Dam's book *The Elder*).

18 4. We have become aware that a student of the CRTS (Daniel Shin) is giving guest lectures at the IRCK  
19 Theological Academy.

20 **Observations**

21 We advise synod to include among its observations:

22 1. GS 2016 (art. 107) decided:

23 *4.1 To encourage the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to continue contact*  
24 *with the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK) where possible.*

25 2. This contact was edifying and beneficial. It is clear that they value the contact with the CanRC. This  
26 is evident from: a) the invitations to CanRC ministers and professors over the years to give lectures  
27 at the IRCK Theological Academy; and b) books by CanRC authors have been translated into Korean  
28 and published by their publishing house (Sungyak (Holy Covenant) Press).

29 3. For practical reasons, they are not seeking EF with the CanRC.

30 **Considerations**

31 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

32 1. While it is edifying to have contact with the IRCK, it is not necessary to maintain this on an official  
33 level.

34 2. Our current contact is not likely to develop towards EF.

35 **Recommendations**

36 We recommend that Synod decide:

37 1. To end official contact with the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK).  
38

1 **RCK: History of the Relationship**

2 GS 2010 (art. 105): It is decided to learn more about the RCK through the KPCK. GS 2010 (art. 173): It is  
3 decided not to accept the EF offer of the RCK but to wait until more information becomes available.

4 GS 2013 (art. 155): It is decided to learn more about the RCK through the KPCK. GS 2013 (art. 191): It is  
5 decided not to enter into EF with the RCK until the churches (via a future general synod) are satisfied  
6 with the results of meetings between the RCK and the KPCK.

7 **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

8 GS 2016 (art. 106) decided:

9 *4.1 To encourage the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to continue contact with*  
10 *the Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK) where possible.*

11 **Execution of this mandate**

12 1. Rev. S.C. Van Dam and Elder Jerome Lee met with representatives of the RCK at the Korea Theological  
13 Seminary in Cheonan on Sept 18, 2017. At this meeting, Rev. Van Dam gave a lecture on the early chapters  
14 of Jeremiah after which an edifying interchange occurred. At this meeting, matters relating to their request  
15 for EF were also discussed.

16 2. We have become aware that a CRTS graduate (Sungwoon Yoon) accepted a call to a RCK congregation  
17 (Gwangju Reformed Church).

18 **Observations**

19 We advise synod to include among its observations:

20 1. GS 2016 (art. 106) decided:

21 *4.1 To encourage the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to continue contact*  
22 *with the Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK) where possible.*

23 2. There has been no reconciliation between the KPCK and the RCK.

24 3. In 2015, one congregation (led by Rev. Dong Sup Song) was suspended from the federation. It is  
25 unclear exactly what the difficulty was.

26 4. Since 2008, the number of congregations in the RCK has decreased from eight to two. The reasons  
27 for this decrease are unclear.

28 **Considerations**

29 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

30 1. It is of concern that reconciliation with the KPCK has not been reached.

31 2. It is of concern that the RCK has steadily decreased in membership for reasons that are unclear.

32 3. Since there are only two congregations left in the RCK, it does not make sense to maintain official  
33 contact with the RCK.

34 **Recommendation**

35 We recommend that Synod decide:

36 1. To end official contact with the Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK).  
37

## **New Zealand (RCNZ)**

For statistics and further general information see the summary of the report.

### **History of the Relationship**

The RCNZ sent an invitation to the CanRC to enter into relations shortly before GS 2004 (Chatham).

GS 2004 (art. 100):

5.3.3 with respect to the RCNZ, not to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship at this time.

Consideration 4.4. Synod notes ...that more information should be made available to the churches regarding the RCNZ. This should be done in consultation with the work of the FRCA, GKv and via the ICRC.

GS 2007 (art. 66):

5.1 To recognize that the RCNZ is a faithful church of God and accept the invitation of the RCNZ to enter into a Relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship according to the established rules.

5.2 To write a letter addressed to the next synod of the RCNZ communicating this decision and including the request that the RCNZ take note of and take seriously the concerns of the FRCA regarding the CRCAustralia.

5.3 To send a delegate (delegation) to the next synod of the RCNZ in order to present this letter to formalize relations and visit the churches.

GS 2010 (art. 154)

4.1 To continue the relation of EF with the RCNZ under the adopted rules.

4.2 To continue to monitor the relation between the RCNZ and the CRC-Australia and encourage the RCNZ to seriously re-evaluate its relationship with the CRC-Australia in light of its continuing practice of ordaining women to the office of deacon.

4.3 To encourage the RCNZ to keep seeking ways to grow closer towards the FRCA.

4.4 To invite the RCNZ to become better acquainted with the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton.

GS 2013 (art. 192): decided to continue EF and further:

4.2.2 To try to get a better understanding of the practical changes entailed by the relationship of EF that was begun in 2007 and to encourage the RCNZ to be consequent in their relationship with the CRCAustralia as they develop and finalize the rules for EF;

4.2.3 To encourage the RCNZ to keep seeking ways to grow closer towards the FRCA;

4.2.4 To invite the RCNZ to become better acquainted with CRTS in Hamilton;

### **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

GS 2016 (art. 17) decided:

4.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) under the adopted rules;

4.2 To express appreciation for ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua New Guinea (PNG);

4.3 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to send a delegation to the next RCNZ Synod in 2017.

### **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018**

The RCNZ invited a delegation from the CanRC to attend Synod Palmerston North 2017 and a preceding Reformation Thanksgiving Conference.

Rev. Jan de Gelder, with a CRCA mandate, visited and addressed the RCNZ Synod in Palmerston North on behalf of the CanRC from September 9 -15, 2017. Rev. De Gelder, had served interim in the vacant RCNZ of Masterton in 2017.

The RCNZ sent the Acts of Synod Palmerston North, and the Yearbook of the RCNZ.

The RCNZ has been informed of the decisions of Synod Dunnville 2016 and invited to send a delegation

1 to GS-CanRC 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel).

## 2 Observations

3 The Inter Church relations committee reported to Synod Palmerston North 2017 that they have not had  
4 much direct contact with the CanRC in the past inter-synodical period. Rev. Leo de Vos was delegated to  
5 attend the CanRC Synod at Dunnville, Ontario, in May 2016. Unfortunately he had to cancel his attendance  
6 at the Synod for health reasons. Vacant RCNZ congregations have received pulpit supply from retired CanRC  
7 ministers and do at times consider calling their ministers. Rev. J. de Gelder, minister emeritus of the  
8 Flamborough CanRC was able to lead three church policy conferences in the RCNZ. The Synod decided to  
9 continue our sister-church relationship with the CanRC and to send a delegate to the next CanRC Synod.

10 The mission activities of the of the RCNZ are coordinated by an Overseas Mission Board which expressed  
11 its thankfulness for the excellent cooperation with the Bethel CanRC of Toronto, and with the FRC of  
12 Armadale, Australia in the mission in Papua New Guinea.

13 The RCNZ do not have a federational seminary. However, the Reformed Theological Seminary in  
14 Melbourne Australia, has been maintained in close cooperation with the Christian Reformed Churches of  
15 Australia (CRCAus). Synod approved a new “Memorandum of Understanding” between the RTC and RCNZ.  
16 Article 18 of this document reads that, “*The RCNZ Assembly shall urge the churches to consider supporting  
17 the College by encouraging potential students to attend the RTC.*” However, this preference is not shared  
18 by all of the churches, some of which have sent their students to North American Seminaries. There are two  
19 students studying at Mid America Reformed Seminary.

20 At Synod Bishopdale 2014 the RCNZ downgraded their relationship with the CRCAus from sister church  
21 to ‘ecumenical fellowship’, which places important safe guards for attestations and preaching. The issue of  
22 the ordination of deaconesses, and subsequently the different views of ‘office’ and ‘ordination’ between  
23 the two federations continues to be a discussion point.

24 The relationship that the RCNZ had with the CRCAus had been an impediment for the FRCA in entering  
25 into EF. After this relationship was downgraded in 2014 the FRCA entered into EF with the RCNZ at Synod  
26 Baldivis 2015. The delegate from FRCA to Synod Palmerston North, Rev. H. Alkema gave evidence of the  
27 development of a warm relationship between the federations: Members of both federations travel back  
28 and forth and there have been pulpit exchanges and conferences. There is optimism for future work  
29 together.

30 The RCNZ has a sister church relationship with the Reformed Church in South Africa (Gereformeerde  
31 Kerk in Suid Afrika, GKSA). This federation ordains women to the office of deacon. However, as this had not  
32 yet been presented to the GKSA as a cause for strain in the relationship, the RCNZ has decided to continue  
33 the sister church relationship and to intensify the discussion with the GKSA on this matter. Synod expressed  
34 thankfulness that an extraordinary General Synod of the GKSA of January 2016 decided not to open the  
35 offices of elder and minister to women.

36 The RCNZ synods have expressed concerns about developments in the GKv. Rev. Dr. Melle Oosterhuis  
37 (secretary of the BBK and chairman of GS-GKv 2017) and Mr. Johan de Jong (member of BBK) were present  
38 at Synod Palmerston North as delegates of the GKv, explaining the decision of Meppel 2017 to admit women  
39 to be ordained in all the offices of the church. Synod Palmerston North decided:

- 40 1. *To express deep concern that the RCN [=GKv] has not abandoned its current hermeneutical direction  
41 which has led it to, for one thing, admitting women to the offices of the church, but is also  
42 demonstrated in a number of other areas of church life, e.g. the lenient attitude in some RCN  
43 churches towards the admission of practicing homosexuals to the Lord’s Supper.*
- 44 2. *To suspend our sister-church relationship with the RCN due to the decision of the RCN 2017 Synod  
45 (see Report 17, footnote 5) to admit women to all the offices of the church, and the hermeneutical  
46 direction for this decision.*
- 47 3. *Unless there is repentance, to terminate our sister-church relationship with the RCN at our next  
48 Synod in 2020.*

1 Synod Palmerston North decided to continue to initiate official contact with the deputies of the Grace  
2 Presbyterian Church of NZ in order to explore future cooperation. This federation was established in 2002  
3 in reaction to growing liberalism in the mainline Presbyterian Church of NZ and claims to be firmly  
4 committed to the Reformed faith, holding strongly to the Bible as its rule of faith and life. There are 20  
5 churches around New Zealand and a number of church-plants.

6 Synod Palmerston North decided to enter into a sister church relationship with the Presbyterian  
7 Reformed Church of Australia. It is a small federation, less than 10 congregations and a few church plants  
8 in S.E. Australia, between Brisbane and Adelaide, as well as church plants in Fiji and other Pacific Islands,  
9 where they do mission work.

10 We advise synod to include among its observations:

11 1. GS 2016 (art. 17) decided:

12 4.1 *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of New*  
13 *Zealand (RCNZ) under the adopted rules;*

14 4.2 *To express appreciation for ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua New*  
15 *Guinea (PNG);*

16 4.3 *To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to send a delegation to*  
17 *the next RCNZ Synod in 2017.*

18 2. Rev. J. de Gelder attended the RCNZ Synod in 2017.

19 3. Gratitude was expressed by the RCNZ for the good cooperation with the CanRC and the FRCA in  
20 mission work in PNG.

21 4. The RCNZ have been diligent and consistent in their ecclesiastical relations, both in maintaining and  
22 promoting unity with true and faithful churches and in raising concerns with sister churches.

### 23 **Considerations**

24 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

25 1. The relationship between the RCNZ and CanRC has been of mutual benefit in the area of missions,  
26 inter-church relations, and support of vacant churches.

### 27 **Recommendations**

28 We recommend that synod decide:

29 1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of New  
30 Zealand (RCNZ) under the adopted rules;

31 2. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

32 2.1 To express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua New  
33 Guinea;

34 2.2 To send a delegation to the next RCNZ Synod in 2020;

35 2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

36

## Scotland (FCS, FCC)

For statistics and further general information see the summary of the report.

### FCS: History of the Relationship

GS 1986 (art. 178): It is decided to open contact with the FCS and investigate the possibility of EF with them.

GS 1989 (art. 116): The mandate given at GS 1986 is renewed. GS 1989 (art. 117): The relationships between local CanRC and FCS should be taken into account.

GS 1992 (art. 128): It is decided to recognize the FCS as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter into EF with them.

GS 1995 (art. 101) & GS 1998 (art. 120): It is decided to continue EF with the FCS

GS- 2001 (art. 34): It is decided to continue EF with the FCS and to monitor the situation with the FCC. It is also decided to inform the FCS and FCC that they have our prayerful support for reconciliation.

GS 2004 (art. 43): It is decided to continue EF with the FCS. It is recognized that GS cannot judge the division between the FCS and FCC. Both federations are informed that they have our prayerful support for reconciliation.

GS 2007 (art. 80): It is decided to continue EF with the FCS and to exhort the FCS and the FCC to continue their efforts toward reconciliation.

GS 2010 (art. 81): It is decided to continue EF with the FCS and to encourage the FCS and the FCC to work earnestly at reconciliation and reunion.

GS 2013 (art. 161): It is decided to continue EF with the FCS and to be available to assist the FCS and FCC in any efforts at reconciliation and reunion, should that be requested.

GS 2016 (art. 46): It is decided to continue EF with the FCS and, as no request to assist in reconciliation with the FCC was received, this part of the mandate was discontinued.

### Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)

GS 2016 (art. 46) decided:

4.1 *To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), mutual presence at assemblies of sister-churches) and to send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years.*

4.2 *To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCS congregations in North America.*

### Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018

1. Rev. S.C. Van Dam and br. J. Vanderstoep visited the FCS GA in May 2017. Br. Vanderstoep brought greetings on behalf of the CanRC to the FCS at this GA.

2. The material for the GA-FCS 2017 was reviewed by the aforementioned brothers. It is clear from this material that the FCS desires to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ.

3. A letter of greetings was sent to the GA-FCS in May 2018.

4. Beyond a letter of invitation to the GA-FCS in May 2017, a letter was received from the FCS dated June 13, 2017 in which we were informed about the moral misconduct of the late Rev. Dr. Iain D. Campbell which would have resulted in deposition from the ministry.

5. An article reporting the visit to Scotland was published in *Clarion* (vol. 66:23, 645-648).

6. There was good interaction between the CanRC delegates and the FCS delegates at the ICRC in Jordan, Ontario in July 2017.

### Observations

We advise synod to include in its observations:

1. GS 2016 (Article 46) decided:

4.1 *To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) under the adopted rules;*

4.2 *To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

1           4.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of  
2           the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), mutual presence at assemblies of  
3           sister-churches) and to send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years.

4           4.2.2 To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCS  
5           congregations in North America.

6           2. There are no FCS congregations in the vicinity of CanRC congregations. There are several  
7           congregations on Prince Edward Island (see [www.peifreechurch.org](http://www.peifreechurch.org)).

8           3. EF with the FCS is maintained since they are a faithful church of Jesus Christ. With increased  
9           globalization it is good to have interaction with them to learn from their struggles in a similar  
10          secularized context.

### 11 **Considerations**

12          We advise synod to include in its considerations:

- 13           1. It is good and beneficial to maintain EF with the FCS for the reason outlined in point 3 above.
- 14           2. Since there are no local congregations in the vicinity of CanRC congregations, it does not make sense  
15           to maintain item 4.2.2 of the mandate of GS 2016.

### 16 **Recommendations**

17          We recommend that synod decide:

- 18           1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS)  
19           under the adopted rules;
- 20           2. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
  - 21               2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the  
22               International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), mutual presence at assemblies of sister-  
23               churches);
  - 24               2.2 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;
  - 25               2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

1 **FCC: History of the Relationship**

2 GS 2001 (art. 34): It is decided to continue EF with the FCS and to monitor the situation with the FCC. It is  
3 also decided to inform the FCS and FCC that they have our prayerful support for reconciliation.

4 GS 2004 (art. 43): It is decided to continue EF with both the FCS and FCC. It is recognized that GS cannot  
5 judge the division between the FCS and FCC. Both federations are informed that they have our prayerful  
6 support for reconciliation.

7 GS 2007 (art. 80): It is decided to discontinue EF with the FCC as GS 2004 erred in continuing EF with the  
8 FCC; and further, to exhort the FCS and the FCC to continue their efforts toward reconciliation.

9 GS 2010 (art. 81): It is decided to reinstate EF with the FCC and to encourage the FCS and the FCC to work  
10 earnestly at reconciliation and reunion.

11 GS 2013 (art. 162): It is decided to continue EF with the FCC and to be available to assist the FCS and FCC in  
12 any efforts at reconciliation and reunion, should that be requested.

13 GS 2016 (art. 45): It is decided to continue EF with the FCC and, as no request to assist in reconciliation with  
14 the FCS was received, this part of the mandate was discontinued.

15 **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

16 GS 2016 (art. 45) decided:

17 *4.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) under the*  
18 *adopted rules;*

19 *4.2 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

20 *4.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the*  
21 *International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), mutual presence at assemblies of sister-*  
22 *churches) and to send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;*

23 *4.2.2 To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC*  
24 *congregations in North America.*

25 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018**

26 1. Rev. S.C. Van Dam and br. J. Vanderstoep visited the GA-FCC in May 2017. Rev. Van Dam brought  
27 greetings on behalf of the CanRC to the FCC at this GA.

28 2. The material for the GA-FCC 2017 was reviewed by the aforementioned brothers. It is clear from this  
29 material that the FCC desires to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ.

30 3. A letter of greetings was sent to the GA-FCC in May 2018.

31 4. Some correspondence (invitations and greetings) was exchanged.

32 5. An article reporting the visit to Scotland was published in *Clarion* (vol. 66:23, 645-648).

33 6. There was good interaction between the CanRC delegates and the FCC delegates at the ICRC in Jordan,  
34 Ontario in July 2017.

35 **Observations**

36 We advise synod to include in its observations:

37 1. GS 2016 (Article 46) decided:

38 *4.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) under*  
39 *the adopted rules;*

40 *4.2 To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

41 *4.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of*  
42 *the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), mutual presence at assemblies of*  
43 *sister-churches) and to send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;*

44 *4.2.2 To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC*  
45 *congregations in North America.*

46 2. There is only one FCC mission post (Smith Falls, Ontario) about an hour away from Ottawa, Ontario.

47 3. EF with the FCC is maintained since they are a faithful church of Jesus Christ. With increased  
48 globalization it is good to have interaction with them to learn from their struggles in a similar

1 secularized context.

2 **Considerations**

3 We advise synod to include in its considerations:

- 4 1. It is good and beneficial to maintain EF with the FCC for the reasons outlined in point 3 above.  
5 2. Since there is only one mission post in the vicinity of Ottawa, Ontario, it does not make sense to  
6 maintain item 4.2.2 of the mandate of GS 2016.

7 **Recommendations**

8 We recommend that synod decide:

- 9 1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Church Continuing (FCC)  
10 under the adopted rules;  
11 2. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):  
12 2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the  
13 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), mutual presence at assemblies of sister-  
14 churches);  
15 2.2 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;  
16 2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

17

## **South Africa (FRCSA)**

For statistics and further general information see the summary of the report.

### **Recent history of the Relationship**

GS 1954 (art. 54): decision to establish meaningful contact with the FRCSA.

GS 2004 (art. 33):

5.1. *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa under the adopted rules.*

5.2. *To mandate the CRCA:*

5.2.1. *To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of financial assistance to aid them with their extensive mission work and in their labours among the concerned members in other church federations;*

5.2.2. *To invite the Board of Governors of our Theological College to seek ways and means to offer assistance to the FRCSA for theological training, such as extending academic support through guest lectures and the like by the faculty of our College in Hamilton, Ontario.*

5.2.3. *To request the reasons why the FRCSA have revoked sister church relations with our sister churches in Korea and report to the next Synod.*

GS 2007 (art. 124):

4.1. *To continue ecclesiastical fellowship with the FRCSA under the adopted rules.*

4.2. *To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of continued and increased prayerful and financial assistance, to help them with their extensive mission work as well as the compassionate pursuits among the disadvantaged.*

4.3. *To mandate the Board of Governors of our Theological College to encourage and aid the FRCSA in the quest to redesign their Theological Training by serving them with advice, and by extending academic backing through guest lectures, as well as assisting students who may enroll here with the necessary language and social support.*

GS 2010 (art. 82): similar to GS 2007

GS 2013 (art. 132): similar to GS 2007

### **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

GS 2016 (art. 47) decided:

4.1 *To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA);*

4.2 *To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;*

4.3 *To encourage the CRTS to support the FRCSA in the training of their theological students, because of the unique circumstances of the FRCSA theological training program.*

### **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018**

In August 2018 CRCA committee member O. Bouwman traveled to South Africa for the synod which was convened by the church at Soshanguve North, near Pretoria; he was accompanied by Dr. A. J. deVisser for the duration of synod.

- A report of that visit was shared in *Clarion*.
- Correspondence was received from the Mission deputies of the FRCSA, describing their anticipated budget shortfalls, and asking us to consider funding some of their mission work.

### **Observations**

#### **The importance of EF between the CanRC and the FRCSA**

Why should EF between our federations continue? Consider the following realities:

1. We have had a continued relationship with the FRCSA ever since our first synod.
2. There are numerous informal personal connections and relationships which ensure continued dialogue.

3. As the FRCSA distances itself from the Dutch, they are turning increasingly to their Australian and Canadian brothers and sisters. Since Canadian experiences related to many of the topics under discussion on their table (including not only the CRTS but also their relationship with other federations in their own country) are considered helpful and relevant to them, they genuinely appreciate our interest and involvement in their activities. Having two delegates at synod was very helpful.
4. As mandated by Synod Dunnville, during the past several years there has been serious exploration of to what degree our CRTS can help the FRCSA adequately prepare their young men for the ministry.
5. One of the recent CRTS graduates, Johan Bruintjes, accepted a call from the church in Cape Town and in 2017 began the ministry there.
6. Finally, it should be noted that a significant amount of money flows each year from Canada to South Africa for the support of the burgeoning Reformational Study Centre near Pretoria. In connection with that, Rev. Ryan Kampen is serving with a “special ministerial task” under the oversight of the church in Dunnville for this project.

We recommend that synod observe:

2. Our EF with the FRCSA dates back to the first CanRC synods. There continue to be many close ties – ecclesiastical, operational, and personal – between the FRCSA and CanRC.

### **The CRTS**

The discussions between CRTS and the FRCSA have been meaningful and helpful in our relationship. We are thankful for the evident good rapport in this regard, and are also grateful that a CRTS professor, Dr. A.J. de Visser, was willing to be a CanRC delegate to GS-FRCSA 2017.

We recommend that synod observe:

3. Over the past three years the CRTS has been supporting the FRCSA in the training of their theological students.

### **Financial Assistance**

Unlike several prior synods, the mandate of GS 2016 makes no mention of financial assistance for the FRCSA. This was because the FRCSA had indicated that financial assistance from us was not necessary at the time.

More recently, however, the topic of financial need has come up again. Our delegates have had some interactions with the South African brotherhood regarding the possibility of soliciting our churches for money in support of their projects. The delegates informed the FRCSA deputies that:

- We are aware that the FRCSA has been recommended by our synods to our churches as “worthy of continued prayerful and financial assistance” in the past. We rejoice in the opportunity to share.
- Since our committee does not have a mandate or capacity to provide financial support to other church federations, one of our churches a decade ago agreed to function as a coordinating address for the collection and distribution of such funds; our structures are different than those of most other federations, including our Australian brotherhood.
- Canada’s government has changed laws in the last decade or so with regards to charitable organizations sending money abroad. Current legislation mandates that Canadian charitable organizations sending money abroad must be able to demonstrate “direction and control” over the funds as they are being disbursed. Effectively, this means that no Canadian church can act as a conduit for funds going to a foreign federation’s mission work.

It may be appropriate to suggest that relief / development organizations like the “Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund” or “Word and Deed,” having the necessary personnel, structures, and protocols in place, are better positioned to appropriately respond to requests for financial assistance than our committee would be able to. Such organizations can professionally assess needs and opportunities and work within the parameters established by the Canadian government.

1 We recommend that synod observe:

- 2 4. The financial needs of the FRCSA are and can be expected to continue being substantial and merit  
3 attention.

4 **Summary of recommended observations**

5 We advise that Synod include among its observations:

- 6 1. GS 2016 (art. 47) decided:

7 4.1 *To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa*  
8 *(FRCSA);*

9 4.2 *To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to send a delegation to*  
10 *the next synod of the FRCSA;*

11 4.3 *To encourage the CRTS to support the FRCSA in the training of their theological students,*  
12 *because of the unique circumstances of the FRCSA theological training program.*

- 13 2. Our EF with the FRCSA dates back to the first CanRC synods. There continue to be many close ties –  
14 ecclesiastical, operational, and personal – between the FRCSA and CanRC.  
15 3. Over the past three years the CRTS has been supporting the FRCSA in the training of their theological  
16 students.  
17 4. The financial needs of the FRCSA are and can be expected to continue to be substantial and merit  
18 attention.

19 **Considerations**

20 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 21 1. With thankfulness to the Lord, the FRCSA evidences in confession and practice to be a church  
22 federation seeking to serve the Lord according to His Word.  
23 2. There is sufficient reason to continue EF with the FRCSA.  
24 3. The CRCA has never had a mandate to support other church federations financially. However,  
25 previously the CRCA did have a mandate “To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of  
26 continued and increased prayerful and financial assistance, to help them with their extensive  
27 mission work as well as the compassionate pursuits among the disadvantaged.” (GS 2013 art. 132)  
28 Given the current circumstances of the FRCSA, it may be appropriate to again include a provision  
29 regarding finances in the committee’s mandate. Such a mandate could not only recommend the  
30 FRCSA to the churches as worthy of increased assistance, but also mandate the CRCA to assist the  
31 FRCSA in seeking out appropriate churches or organizations which may be able to responsibly  
32 interact with such requests for financial assistance. Simultaneously, it needs to be acknowledged  
33 by churches possessing the means and desire to assist the FRCSA that there are Canada Revenue  
34 Agency regulations regarding the need for charitable organizations which send money overseas to  
35 retain “direction and control” over how these funds are disbursed.

36 **Recommendations**

37 We recommend that synod decide:

- 38 1. To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA);  
39 2. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):  
40 2.1 to send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;  
41 2.2 if requests for financial assistance for FRCSA projects (to help them support the needy churches  
42 in their federation and assist them with their extensive mission and relief work efforts) are  
43 received, assist them in seeking out appropriate churches or organizations which may be able  
44 to responsibly interact with such requests; in the event that churches are willing and able to  
45 help, inform them that there are Canada Revenue Agency regulations regarding the need for  
46 charitable organizations which send money overseas to have “direction and control” over how  
47 these funds are disbursed;  
48 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

## ***International (ICRC)***

For statistics and further general information see the summary of the report.

### **History of our membership**

GS 1980 (art. 153):

*7. With regard to the proposed Reformed International Conference [Synod decided]:*

- a. That the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad be authorized to send two delegates to this Conference;*
- b. That a report on this Conference analyzing its basis, aim, powers, structure, members and agenda, along with a recommendation on how to proceed further in this matter, be sent to the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches by the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad;*
- c. That Synod Smithville 1980 refrain from any official endorsement of this Conference due to its preliminary character.*

GS 1983 (art. 121):

*1. to join the ICRC with the clear instruction to move the following amendments to the proposed Constitution: ...*

*...*

*5. to authorize the Committee to invite the ICRC to hold its second Conference, to be held in 1989, in the Vancouver area, as guests of the Canadian Reformed Churches;*

The following synod decisions all concern (explicitly or by implication) continued membership in the ICRC:

GS 1986, art. 175; GS 1989, art. 128; GS 1992, art. 94; GS 1995, art. 101.IV; GS 1998, art. 52; GS 2001, art. 53; GS 2004, art. 52; GS 2007, art. 132; GS 2010, art. 156; GS 2013, art. 167; GS 2013, art. 167.

We note that GS 2013 considered “Having four members of the CRCA attend the ICRC was beneficial in the past and this practice should be maintained.” (Art. 167, cons. 3.2)

The following decisions all concern the CanRC recommending and voting for new members to the ICRC: GS 1998, art. 52; GS 2004, art. 52; GS 2007, art. 27.

### **Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)**

GS 2016 (art. 121) decided:

- 4.1 To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC);*
- 4.2 To approve the revised Constitution of the ICRC, as recommended;*
- 4.3 To mandate the CRCA to ensure an appropriate CanRC presence at ICRC events;*
- 4.4 To send a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members to the next ICRC, scheduled to meet in southern Ontario in 2017, keeping in mind Cons. 3.3.<sup>18</sup>*

### **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018**

Regular correspondence with the ICRC was maintained, consisting of supplying the ICRC with information on the CanRC, and paying annual dues.

The CRCA communicated with the CCCNA, the CCU, and the CRCA-SRN about forming a four-member delegation to the 2017 ICRC. The CCU decided not to participate. The CCCNA and the CRCA-SRN each appointed a member to be part of the delegation. As the ICRC only allows 4 delegates per member church, of whom only two can be voting members, it was decided that the CRCA and the CCCNA would each send a voting member, while the second CRCA member and the CRCA-SRN would be advisors. The delegation consisted of Rev. Dr. R.C. Janssen (CRCA), Dr. J. Temple (CCCNA), Rev. S.C. VanDam (CRCA), and Rev. J. Moesker (CRCA-SRN). As Rev. Moesker had to be absent for one session of the ICRC, a session which proved

---

<sup>18</sup> *Consideration 3.3: Abbotsford’s suggestion makes sense. It would be good for the CRCA to communicate with the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) and Committee for Church Unity (CCU) when they consider delegation to ICRC events.*

1 critical in the discussion on GKv membership, Dr. C. VanDam (CRCA-SRN) attended for that one session.

2 The CRCA was informed by the OPC just prior to the 2017 ICRC of their intention to move that the GKv  
3 be suspended as ICRC member, as its decision to allow women to serve in office puts it at odds with the  
4 ICRC constitution. The CRCA, reflecting on the text of the motion and on decisions of previous CanRC synods,  
5 decided it would be right and proper for the CanRC to second this motion. The delegation was mandated  
6 accordingly, and this mandate was executed.

7 The CanRC delegates participated fully in ICRC activities.

8 - Rev. VanDam was a member of the advisory committee on Member Churches.

9 - Dr. Temple was a member of the advisory committee on the next ICRC. An attempt will be made to  
10 have the next ICRC take place in India; as there are a lot of government hoops to go through, an  
11 alternative location may be sought.

12 - As delegates we voted in favour of the admission of the UPC and CRCAus. Both churches were  
13 considered to be in compliance with the ICRC constitution. Both churches were being sponsored  
14 by, among others, our sister churches (the CRCAus by the RCNZ, the UPC by the OPC).

15 Some of the highlights of this ICRC were:

16 - sitting together with the FRCNA delegates to reflect on where the CanRC and FRCNA are at

17 - a meeting of the GGRC, GGRI, CanRC, URCNA, GKv, URCNA, and the Timor Mission Board of the  
18 Smithville CanRC

## 19 Observations

### 20 Recent activity

21 In light of the foregoing report we recommend that synod observe:

22 2. The ICRC met in Jordan, Ontario from July 12-19-, 2017.

23 3. This conference was an excellent opportunity to interact with and have meetings with delegates of  
24 a number of churches with which we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) and also with delegates of  
25 churches with which we do not.

26 4. The ICRC adopted revisions to the Constitution.

### 27 Benefits of the CanRC being a member of the ICRC

28 The ICRC is a very useful instrument to maintain contact with orthodox Reformed and Presbyterian  
29 churches around the world. Through the ICRC member churches apprise each other of their activities  
30 (something that will now be facilitated by *Lux Mundi*). We can share in each other's joys and burdens. As  
31 the 2017 ICRC made clear, we can also stand shoulder to shoulder for Reformed faith and practice.

32 We recommend that synod observe:

33 5. The ICRC is a useful vehicle to promote unity and harmony in the church world-wide.

### 34 Calling for the CanRC to participate in the ICRC

35 The CanRC has always been heavily involved in the ICRC, not just as a member church, but also by way  
36 of providing officers and functionaries. With the suspension of the GKv as members (and the FRCA no longer  
37 members), the focus shifts all the more to the CanRC as a charter member to represent the original intent  
38 of the ICRC: to be a forum that fosters church unity.

39 Currently there are 5 positions filled by CanRC (ARC) members:

40 Corresponding Secretary: Rev. Dr. J. Visscher. In this role, he is member of the Executive Committee,  
41 the Coordinating Committee, and advisor to the Publications Committee

42 Treasurer: Mr. K. Lodder

43 Missions Committee secretary: Dr. A.J. de Visser

44 Publications Committee convener: Rev. Dr. R.C. Janssen. In this role, he is member of the  
45 Coordinating Committee and has been appointed editor-in-chief of *Lux Mundi*.

46 Publications Committee member: Mr. F. Ezinga

47 Theological Education Committee member: Rev. Dr. G.H. Visscher

1 We recommend that synod observe:

- 2 6. The CanRC is called upon to serve the global community of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches via  
3 the ICRC.

4 **CanRC delegations to the ICRC**

5 The CRCA, CCCNA, and CRCA-SRN are agreed that creating a delegation from members of various inter-  
6 church committees worked out well. The presence of CRCA-SRN members was appreciated as the GKv  
7 membership came up for discussion. The presence of a CCCNA was appreciated as the CanRC & FRCNA  
8 delegations met. The CCCNA has indicated that, given the experience, the CRCA is welcome to send a  
9 delegate to NAPARC in a similar way. We regret the fact that the CCU did not participate, especially since  
10 the URCNA hosted the 2017.

11 We recommend that synod observe:

- 12 7. The experience of having a delegation to a multi-church conference consisting of members from the  
13 various inter-church relations committees has been good.

14 **Overview of Observations**

15 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 16 1. GS 2016 (art. 121) decided:

17 4.1 *To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches*  
18 *(ICRC);*

19 4.2 *To approve the revised Constitution of the ICRC, as recommended;*

20 4.3 *To mandate the CRCA to ensure an appropriate CanRC presence at ICRC events;*

21 4.4 *To send a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members to the next ICRC,*  
22 *scheduled to meet in southern Ontario in 2017, keeping in mind Cons. 3.3.*

- 23 2. The ICRC met in Jordan, Ontario from July 12-19, 2017.

24 3. This conference was an excellent opportunity to interact with and have meetings with delegates of  
25 a number of churches with which we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) and also with delegates of  
26 churches with which we do not.

27 4. The ICRC adopted revisions to the Constitution.

28 5. The ICRC is a useful vehicle to promote unity and harmony in the church world-wide.

29 6. The CanRC is called upon to serve the global community of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches via  
30 the ICRC.

31 7. The experience of having a delegation to a multi-church conference consisting of members from the  
32 various inter-church relations committees has been good.

33 **Considerations**

34 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

35 1. With thankfulness to the Lord, the ICRC continues to be a useful forum to promote harmony and  
36 unity among Reformed and Presbyterian churches world wide.

37 2. It has proven prudent to have the inter-church relations committees of the CanRC labour  
38 cooperatively, especially with respect to multi-church forums.

39 **Recommendations**

40 We recommend that synod decide:

41 1. To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches  
42 (ICRC);

43 2. To mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

44 1. to ensure appropriate CanRC participation in ICRC activities;

45 2. in consultation with other CanRC inter-church relations committees, to form a delegation of two  
46 voting members and two advisory members to the next ICRC.

## SECTION 3 - COMBINED REPORT OF THE CRCA AND CCCNA

### INTRODUCTION

Currently the execution of CanRC Synod decisions with respect to other churches as per CO article 50 is mandated to four committees:

- The CRCA (Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad)
- The CRCA-SRN (CRCA – Subcommittee Relations (churches in the) in the Netherlands)
- The CCCNA (Committee for Contact with Churches in North America)
- The CCU (Coordinators for Church Unity)

These four committees operate independently of each other. This has proven to be inefficient and cumbersome, and at times even problematic.

For example, issues arise in multi-lateral situations such as the ICRC (International Conference of Reformed Churches) and NAPARC (North American Presbyterian And Reformed Council). GS 2016 (Dunnville) acknowledged this implicitly when it mandated the CRCA to consult with other CanRC inter church relations committees about the delegation to the ICRC. The 4-member delegation to the ICRC consisted of 2 CRCA members, 1 CCCNA member, and 1 CRCA-SRN member (though invited, the CCU did not participate). Your committees found the experience good, and the CCCNA decided that the CRCA could delegate someone to a NAPARC meeting. A similar issue arises when there are concurrent broadest assemblies, such as that of the URCNA and OPC in 2018.

Issues also arise, among others, with respect to inconsistency in policies for other bonds of churches (e.g., whom to invite to our general synods) and lack of knowledge regarding the intricacies and sensitivities of relationships with third parties (e.g. the relationship with the GGRC when talking to the URCNA, or with the GKv when talking to the OPC). Recognizing this, the CRCA and CCCNA arranged a meeting of delegations from the CRCA and the CCCNA. That meeting took place on March 1, 2018, via a video conference call. Minutes of that meeting were reported to the CRCA and CCCNA, and has culminated in this report, which is being submitted by the CRCA and CCCNA together to GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel).

### HISTORY

GS 1954 (art. 100) created the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad (CCCA)

GS 1962 (art. 226) created a Committee to Write to the Christian Reformed Church (CRCNA) and continued the CCCA.

GS 1965 (art. 216) continued the CCCA and created two further committees, one for Contact with the CRCNA, the other for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). The Committee for Contact with the CRCNA existed for a short while.

GS 1992 (art. 124) continued the CCCA and CC-OPC, and further created a Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU) to represent the CanRC at the Alliance of Reformed Churches (cf. art. 80). GS 1992 (art. 79) mandated the CCCA to investigate the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS).

GS 1995 (art. 118) continued the CCCA, CC-OPC, CPEU, and added a Committee for Contact with the Reformed Church in Quebec (ERQ).

GS 1998 (art. 143), besides continuing the CPEU, reorganized things somewhat by creating two committees: the CRCA (Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad) and the CCCA (*now*: Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas). For the CCCA three subcommittees were appointed directly by synod: RCUS, ERQ, and OPC.

GS 2001 (art. 98) continued the CRCA, CCCA, and CPEU. Contact with the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) arose via the CRCA, GS 2001 (art. 56) determined it would be the domain of the CCCA. The Synod Acts did not report the appointment of subcommittees.

GS 2004 (art. 116) continued the CRCA, CCCA, and CPEU. The index to the Acts suggests that the CCCA mandate now included mandates for: the Independent Presbyterian Churches in Mexico, the Korean

1 Presbyterian Churches in North America, the ERQ, the OPC, the RCUS, and the IRB, as well as NAPARC.  
2 GS 2007 (art. 174) decided to divide the workload somewhat differently again, by appointing a Committee  
3 for Church Unity (CCU), a Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA), and a  
4 Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA). The CCCNA was split into a subcommittee East  
5 and a subcommittee West.

6 GS 2010 (art. 60) received a recommendation from the CRCA to consolidate and reorganise inter church  
7 relations by disbanding the CRCA and CCCNA and create one Committee on Inter-church Relations. As  
8 this recommendation did not include comment from the CCCNA and did not clearly have broad support  
9 among the churches the proposal was not adopted. GS 2010 (art. 167) continued the CRCA, CCCNA, and  
10 CCU, and created the CRCA–Subcommittee for Contact with Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

## 11 **OBSERVATIONS**

12 The CRCA and CCCNA advise that synod include in its observations:

- 13 1. The CRCA and CCCNA have provided synod with an overview of the history of inter-church relations  
14 as practised by the CanRC since coming into existence.
- 15 2. The structural organization of the CanRC interchurch relations committees is as follows.  
16 The CRCA consists of 6 members, and is currently responsible for 8 EF relations (Australia, New  
17 Zealand, Scotland (2), South Africa, Brazil, Indonesia, Korea), the ICRC, plus 3 contacts (2 in  
18 Korea, 1 in Indonesia)  
19 The CCCNA consists of 8 members, and is currently responsible for 3 EF relations (OPC, RCUS, ERQ),  
20 NAPARC, plus all NAPARC member churches (URCNA excepted) as contacts  
21 The CCU consists of 4 members, and is currently responsible for 1 EF relation (URCNA)  
22 The CRCA-SRN consists of 4 members, and is currently responsible for 1 EF relation (GKv), plus 2  
23 contacts (DGK, GKN).
- 24 3. (If synod indeed so decides:) The dissolution of the CRCA-SRN will increase the workload of the  
25 CRCA.
- 26 4. In the past, committees were put together regionally so that members could meet face to face.  
27 However, over the past three years, many committee meetings have made efficient use of digital  
28 video conferencing technology.<sup>19</sup> Physical distance between members of a committee is no longer  
29 a hindrance in performing committee work.
- 30 5. In the run up to GS 2016 (Dunville) there was lack of clarity over who was should be extending  
31 invitations to other churches and what materials their delegates should have access to.

## 32 **CONSIDERATIONS**

33 The CRCA and CCCNA advise that synod include in its considerations:

- 34 1. The workload of maintaining relationships and contacts with other churches is irregularly distributed  
35 among the various committees.
- 36 2. In 2010 the CRCA recommended consolidation and reorganization of the committees. At that time  
37 the CCCNA was unaware of this recommendation, which became a reason for not adopting it. This  
38 time the request is coming from the CRCA and CCCNA together.
- 39 3. The proposal is not to consolidate and reorganize right now. Rather, it is to mandate a study of how  
40 CO article 50 can best be executed. The “history” makes clear that thus far the approach has  
41 allowed for inconsistencies between the various committees. Thus a study is warranted.
- 42 4. There is not just “one right way” to do inter church relations. Reorganizations have occurred  
43 previously in 1998 and 2007.
- 44 5. Whatever the outcome of this study, there are a number of practical issues that need to be

---

<sup>19</sup> During 2016-2019 the CRCA had one member in Houston, BC, one member in Vernon, BC, and four members in the Fraser Valley. Video conferencing is used for at least one if not two members every meeting.

1 addressed specifically. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, matters relating to inviting  
2 other churches to be present at CanRC general synods, the composition of CanRC delegations to  
3 multi-church conferences such as the ICRC and NAPARC, and effectively having only one level of  
4 relationship (EF); at times a synod has mandated a committee to maintain contact with another  
5 church, without working towards EF.

- 6 6. The study should result in recommendations as to how the findings of the study might become part  
7 of our ecclesiastical regulations (e.g. Church Order, Rules for EF, Synod Guidelines).

## 8 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9 The CRCA and CCCNA recommend that synod decide:

- 10 1. To mandate the CanRC inter-church relations committees (CRCA, CCCNA, CRCA-SRN, and CCU<sup>20</sup>):  
11 1.1. to reflect in consultation with each other on CanRC protocols regarding:  
12 1.1.1 Whom to invite as delegates and whom to invite as observers to our general synods;  
13 1.1.2 Who is responsible for extending this invitation;  
14 1.1.3 What are the rights and privileges of delegates and observers during synod; How are they  
15 cared for during the time of synod and how can they interact with synod (members)?  
16 1.1.4 What synod materials are delegates and observers respectively entitled to;  
17 1.1.5 Who is responsible for ensuring delegates and observers receive the materials they are  
18 entitled to;  
19 1.1.6 How to have CanRC representation at multi-church conferences (e.g. ICRC, NAPARC);  
20 1.2 to recommend how their findings and recommendations as per 1.1 become part of our  
21 ecclesiastical regulations;  
22 1.3 to reflect in consultation with each other how the CanRC interchurch relations committees  
23 might most effectively and efficiently work together, including but not limited to the following  
24 matters:  
25 1.3.1 the flow of information between CanRC inter-church relations committees;  
26 1.3.2 cooperation between CanRC inter-church relations committees;  
27 1.3.3 the pros and cons of consolidating and reorganizing all inter-church relations committees  
28 into one, taking into consideration reflection on this in the past;  
29 1.3.4 the pros and cons of maintaining different types of relationships;  
30 1.4 to report on their findings as per 1.3 and to make recommendations to the churches in relation  
31 to their findings;  
32 1.5 to submit their report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general  
33 synod.  
34  
35

---

<sup>20</sup> In the event the CCU and/or CRCA-SRN is/are discontinued, it/they can be removed.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

The use of abbreviations and acronyms follows the principles set out in the introduction to the acts of GS 2016 (Dunnville).

Language of origin	English equivalent	Spelled out
ARC	ARC	American Reformed Church (affiliated with the CanRC)
BBK	RCA	<i>Betrekkingen met Buitenlandse Kerken</i> (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of a Dutch church federation)
BC	BC	Belgic Confession
CanRC	CanRC	Canadian Reformed Church(es)
CCCA (1954-1998)	CCCA	Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad (of the CanRC). Became the CRCA in 1998.
CCCA (1998-2007)	CCCA	Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas (of the CanRC). The 'jurisdiction' of this committee was later divided over what is now the CRCA, the CCCNA, and the CCU.
CCCNA	CCCNA	Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (of the CanRC)
CCERQ	CCERQ	Committee for Contact with the ERQ (of the CanRC). Merged with other committees in 1998 into the CCCA.
CCOPC	CCOPC	Committee for Contact with the OPC (of the CanRC). Merged with other committees in 1998 into the CCCA.
CCU	CCU	Committee for Church Unity (of the CanRC)
CERCU	CERCU	Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (of the URCNA)
CGKN	CRCN	<i>Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i> (Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands)
CLIR	LAFRC	Latin American Fellowship of Reformed Churches
CLIREF	CLIREF	Committee for Reformed Literature (of the IRB)
CO	CO	Church Order
CPEU	CPEU	Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (of the CanRC) – this committee is now known as the CCU
CRCA	CRCA	Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (of the CanRC)
CRCA-SRN	CRCA-SRN	Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad – Subcommittee for Reformed (churches in the) Netherlands (of the CanRC)
CRCAus	CRCAus	Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
CREIB	CREIB	Committee for Ecclesiastical Relations of the IRB (Brazil)
CRTS	CRTS	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
DGK	TRC	The Reformed Churches / De Gereformeerde Kerken. Aka Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (restored).
EF	EF	Ecclesiastical Fellowship
EPCI	EPCI	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Language of origin	English equivalent	Spelled out
ERQ	RCQ	Reformed Church of Quebec / Église Réformée du Québec
ESV	ESV	English Standard Version (of the Bible)
FCC	FCC	Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
FCS	FCS	Free Church of Scotland
FERC	FERC	First Evangelical Reformed Church (Singapore)
FRCA	FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA	FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (English is now the preferred language; previously also known as VGKSA)
GA	GA	General Assembly (broadest assembly of a church practising Westminster polity)
GGRC	CRCI	<i>Gereja-Gereja Calvini Reformasi di Indonesia</i> (Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia)
GGRI	RCI	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia)
GGRI-KalBar	RCI-KalBar	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Kalimantan Barat</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the Province of Kalimantan Barat)
GGRI-NTT	RCI-NTT	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timur</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur)
GGRI-Papua	RCI-Papua	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Papua</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the Province of Papua)
GKH DGK	RCR TRC	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken – Hersteld</i> (Reformed Churches – Restored) – now known as <i>De Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (The Reformed Churches)
GKNvv GKN	RCNtf	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (voorlopig verband)</i> – Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (temporary federation) Now known as: “ <i>Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland</i> ”
GKSA	RCSA	<i>Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika</i> – Reformed Churches in South Africa
GKv	RCN	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – vrijgemaakt</i> (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – liberated)
GS	GS	General Synod (broadest assembly of churches practising Dort polity)
HC	HC	Heidelberg Catechism
ICRC	ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
IJC	JCI	<i>Institutio Joao Calvina</i> – John Calvin Institute (IRB – Brazil)
IPB	PCB	<i>Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil</i> (Presbyterian Church of Brazil)
IRB	RCB	<i>Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil</i> (Reformed Churches in Brazil)
IRC	IRC	Inter-church Relations Committee (of the RPCNA)

<b>Language of origin</b>	<b>English equivalent</b>	<b>Spelled out</b>
IRCK	<i>IRCK</i>	Independent Reformed Church in Korea
KKERPE	<i>RPCCEE</i>	<i>Kozep es Kelet Europai Reformatus Presbiterianus Egyhaz</i> Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe
KPCA-K	<i>KPCA-K</i>	Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin)
KPCK	<i>KPCK</i>	Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (Previously cited as PCK (Kosin))
LRCA	<i>LRCA</i>	Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford
NAPARC	<i>NAPARC</i>	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
NGK	<i>NRC</i>	<i>Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (Netherlands Reformed Churches)
OPC	<i>OPC</i>	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCA	<i>PCA</i>	Presbyterian Church in America
PRCA	<i>PRCA</i>	Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia
RCK	<i>RCK</i>	Reformed Churches in Korea
RCNZ	<i>RCNZ</i>	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
RCUS	<i>RCUS</i>	Reformed Church in the United States
RES / REC	<i>RES / REC</i>	Reformed Ecumenical Synod, later Reformed Ecumenical Council
RPCNA	<i>RPCNA</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
RPCT	<i>RPCT</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan
RPF	<i>RPF</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship [in India]
RSE	<i>RSE</i>	Regional Synod East (of the CanRC)
RSW	<i>RSW</i>	Regional Synod West (of the CanRC)
SCBP	<i>SCBP</i>	Standing Committee for the <i>Book of Praise</i> (of the CanRC)
SERK	<i>IERC[G]</i>	<i>Selbständige Evangelisch Reformierte Kirche</i> Independent Evangelical Reformed Church [in Germany]
STAKRI		Theological seminary & teachers' college operated under supervision of the GGRI-Timor
STT		Theological seminary in Indonesia. Referenced in this report are the STT supervised by the GGRI-KB, the STT supervised by the GGRI-NTT, and STT-Salem, where GGRC and some GGRI-NTT students go.
URCNA	<i>URCNA</i>	United Reformed Churches in North America
WARC	<i>WARC</i>	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCRC	<i>WCRC</i>	World Communion of Reformed Churches
WRF	<i>WRF</i>	World Reformed Fellowship

#### 8.2.2.1 CRCA Subcommittee Netherlands – DGK

# **REPORT SUBCOMMITTEE FOR RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS CONCERNING DE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN (HERSTELD)**

## **1. Background**

The official Dutch name of this federation is *De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld)* [DGK]. In this report, for the purpose of clarity and consistency, we will continue to use the Dutch acronym DGK. The DGK is a federation of churches which came into being in 2003/2004 when the first groups of concerned people left the GKv. More information can be found on their official website: <https://gereformeerde-kerken-hersteld.nl/>. Currently the federation consists of 11 congregations of which 2 are preaching points. They have 5 ministers in active service and 3 retired ministers. Total membership stands at approximately 1300. The churches meet on a regular basis in 2 classes. Efforts are continuing to reach out to others. Talks with a view to unity with the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN) were initiated by General Synod Groningen 2014 and reconfirmed by Synod Lansingerland 2018. Moreover, informative evenings are being organized for the concerned in the Reformed Churches (liberated), from here on referred to as GKv. The churches maintain a program of Training for the Ministry. It currently has one student. The DGK has an official sister church relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA) and maintains some form of contact with churches in Northern Ireland, South Korea, and of late with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (Borneo). They requested a sister church relationship with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA). The FRCA invited 2 representatives from the DGK to attend their 2018 General Synod Bunbury at which the request was considered. The FRCA decided to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK and the GKN, to await recommendations from the churches on how to proceed with these relations, and to monitor the relationship that exists between the DGK and the LRCA working in close contact with the CanRC deputies regarding these developments. The previous FRCA synod (2012) had indicated that the DGK sister church relationship with the LRCA is a potential obstacle in their contact with the DGK. This could change; see Synod Lansingerland below.

Regarding the DGK the committee received the following mandate from Synod Dunnville 2016:

### **4. Recommendation**

*That Synod decide:*

*4.1 To maintain contact with The Reformed Churches (DGK) and continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to the relationship between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA). (Acts Art. 117)*

## **2. Contact**

The subcommittee maintained contact with the DGK through correspondence and a face-to-face meeting. In a letter dated August 16, 2016 we informed the DGK of the decisions of GS Dunnville 2016 regarding our relationship with the DGK (Art 117) and the decision regarding the Liberated Reformed Church Abbotsford (Art. 119). The subcommittee reiterated the fact that Synod Dunnville maintained the understanding of GS Carman 2013 that the Ecclesiastical Fellowship which the DGK has with the LRCA remains an impediment to closer contact. Also, a copy of the *Acts of Synod Dunnville 2016* in pdf format was forwarded to them for their information together with a request for a meeting with the deputies BBK of the DGK in the Netherlands in 2017.

A letter dated October 12, 2016 was received from the deputies BBK of the DGK informing us of their correspondence with the consistory of the CanRC Abbotsford regarding a proposed meeting to discuss the history of the LRCA. Since the consistory of the CanRC Abbotsford had declined to participate in such a meeting the DGK welcomed the opportunity of a meeting with deputies of the CanRC subcommittee.

In a letter dated October 31, 2016 to deputies BBK of the DGK a meeting in person was arranged and finalized.

The full subcommittee had opportunity to meet with 4 Deputies BBK of the DGK on March 31, 2017 in Ermelo, the Netherlands. The meeting was opened with Scripture reading, prayer and the singing of a Psalm. The DGK deputies expressed their happiness with our analysis of, and our response to the GKv report “*Man, Vrouw & Ambt*”. They appreciated that our message towards the GKv is clear. We could explain what it means in practice that the relationship between the CanRC and the GKv is strained and restricted. They agreed with us that behind many of the new developments in the GKv lies a new way of reading the Scriptures, without binding to the reformed confessions. The DGK deputies asked what our view was of the GKN. This was difficult to answer since the CanRC has never made a statement about these churches. Also, as subcommittee we have never expressed a particular position. We did express our appreciation and thankfulness that there is a new opportunity for ongoing discussions between the GKN and DGK. The DGK brothers shared this gratitude and hoped that it will be possible to conclude that both churches stand on the one foundation of Scripture and the reformed confession. They agreed that if this could be agreed upon they have the calling to work at unity. As CanRC deputies we expressed the hope that, under the Lord’s blessing, these discussions may bear fruit.

The relationship the DGK has with the LRCA and what this means for a possible relationship between the CanRC and DGK was discussed extensively. During the last few years there has been some confusion about this matter. In the past we, as CanRC deputies had expressed our disappointment that DGK had based its decision for a sister church relationship only on information from the LRCA, and had never talked to the other party. They received only one-sided information. Then, when the DGK approached the Abbotsford CanRC, to hear from them about the start of the LRCA, the consistory of Abbotsford indicated that it did not see it their duty to talk with DGK about this issue. There were a number of reasons for this, but an important one was that, in their view, the matter at the root of the establishing of the LRCA was not local, but federational matter. GS Dunnville agreed and therefore this brings the discussion back into the court of the CanRC deputies. As committee we cannot make specific ‘official’ statements. Therefore we acknowledged that these are federational issues in the CanRC: the sister church relationship with the OPC and other Presbyterian churches, the fact that we actively pursue ecclesiastical unity with the URCNA, our membership of NAPARC, etc. But as deputies we maintained that the picture that the LRCA gives of the CanRC is not correct.

This led to the next topic for our discussion: the practices within the OPC when it comes to admission to the Lord’s Supper and confessional membership (an open Lord’s Supper table, where the purity of the table is protected only by a verbal warning from the pulpit, and a profession of faith where members do not commit themselves to the reformed confessions). The DGK deputies posited that these practices are rooted in the problematic doctrine of the church as found in the Westminster Standards. They expressed disappointment that GS Dunnville 2016 decided that there is no longer need to talk about these issues. In the discussion about these topics different views and opinions came out. The CanRC deputies stressed that the Lord gathers his church worldwide, which results in churches that have different practices, because they have a different historical and cultural background and went through different developments. This does not mean that they cannot be faithful churches. Also, a relationship with such a church does not imply that the CanRC take over those practices. In this connection we assured DGK brothers that those practices in Presbyterian churches are not practiced in the CanRC. In response to a question about the membership of the CanRC in NAPARC we answered that NAPARC is a forum in which churches can meet and dialogue with each other, but this body has no authority and does not make any binding decisions.

The DGK deputies inquired about the relationship between the CanRC and the URCNA. We confirmed that at their last Synod the URCNA decided to put a moratorium on further talks about unity/merger with the CanRC. The push for this came in particular from URC churches on the American side of the border.

Over all in Canada we experience good relationships between local CanRC and URC. In that light the URC moratorium is disappointing. The DGK deputies pointed at concerns about the tolerance for theistic evolution among the teachers at Westminster Theol. Seminary in California.

The DGK deputies also asked about the decision of Synod Dunnville 2016 regarding the participation of the sisters in the voting for office bearers. They were wondering: “Do you think that it will be a step towards women in office?” We told them that within our sub-committee there are different opinions when it comes to the matter of women’s voting, but generally we are not really concerned that it will necessarily lead to a striving for women as office bearers in the church.

At the end of our meeting we asked the question: “How do you see us, as CanRC? Can you call us here your brothers in the Lord? Do you see our churches as faithful churches of Christ?” We referred to the negative response to this when we met with the DGK deputies in 2014. The answer was still evasive. It was considered by them too early to make such a statement. There are still several things between us that need to be resolved. The question is, have we made progress in this today? On the part of the DGK there is definitely the desire to come to this point. As committee we left this meeting with more positive feelings than we had the previous times. The atmosphere was cordial and friendly. The meeting was closed with singing and prayer.

### **3. Synod Lansingerland 2018 of the DGK**

This general synod of the DGK was scheduled to be convened in February 2018. However, due to some serious developments in one of the local DGK congregations that had led to a split this general synod was convened in November to immediately deal with this matter. Unfortunately, decisions of the broader assemblies have been rejected by this church. This has resulted in the larger group of members having placed themselves outside the federation. Small pockets of members of surrounding churches have taken sides and it appears that they are now working on forming another ‘federation’ of churches.

This Synod also dealt with a letter from the GKN in which they informed the DGK of their decision to terminate the discussions regarding possible unity of the two federations. This was as the result of an article that appeared in the official DGK church magazine *De Bazuin* which appears to label the GKN as schismatic. The GKN demands that the DGK publicly distances itself from this article. Synod Lansingerland responded that they have no preconditions that need to be met and urged the GKN to reconsider their decision.

Regarding the LRCA, synod decided to maintain the sister church relationship. However, of significant interest is that the deputies for contact with the LRCA have been instructed to engage the LRCA in a discussion about their view on the catholicity of the church. This was articulated by Rev. M.A. Sneep in his address to Synod Bunbury 2018 of the FRCA as follows:

*The synod decided to enter talks with the sister church at Abbotsford about the catholicity of the church in connection with the justification of its secession and its present ecclesiastical position. This decision has been made, because expressions of Abbotsford about churches with the Westminster Standards, have raised various questions with us regarding their vision on the catholicity of the church. We really hope that our sister church in Abbotsford will have an open mind for this discussion and that it may contribute to a right vision and way of acting, particularly there where the catholicity of the church is at stake. This decision makes it clear that DGK wants to be fully reformed and roundly catholic. In this light we’d like to enter talks with the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) as well.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts Synod Bunbury 2018 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, speeches pg. 26ff

Synod Lansingerland of the DGK decided to continue the contact with the CanRC provided that room is given to discuss internal developments within the CanRC regarding the liberation of the LRCA.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendation**

The sub-committee senses a change growing within the DGK regarding its view of the Church and the world-wide church gathering work of our Saviour. The Westminster Confession is no longer considered as unfaithful or not in harmony with Scripture. We believe it to be important to maintain some form of contact with the DGK and to continue monitoring developments within this federation even though they have maintained the relationship with the LRCA.

Rev. J. DeGelder

Rev. J. Moesker

G. J. Nordeman

Dr. C. Van Dam

#### 8.2.2.2 CRCA Subcommittee Netherlands – GKN

# REPORT SUBCOMMITTEE RELATIONS CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS CONCERNING THE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN NEDERLAND (GKN)

## 1. Background

The GKN is a federation of churches that came into being around 2009. It is made up of concerned people that left the GKv and DGK. They present themselves as “a federation of local Reformed churches that, from the Protestant Reformation, through the secession of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1834, the Doleantie in 1886, the Union in 1892 and the Liberation in 1944, 2003 and subsequent years, want to live today only according to the Holy Scripture”. The official Dutch name of this federation is “*Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland*” (GKN), without the insert 'in' and without further postal or informal addition. More information is available in the Dutch language on the federation’s website: (<https://www.gereformeerdekerkennederland.nl/>). Efforts are continuing to reach out to others. Talks with the Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld) [DGK] have taken place with a view to unity. Information evenings are being organized for the concerned in the GKv and others.

Because of its small size and resulting limitations in the church order, the federation had initially added the designation *voorlopig verband* (provisional federation) [GKNvv]. In previous reports we used the acronym RCNpf. This term is now obsolete and will refer to these churches by the Dutch acronym GKN.

Regarding the GKN the committee received the following mandate from Synod Dunnville 2016:

### 4. Recommendation

*That Synod decide:*

*4.1 To maintain contact with the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKNvv) and continue to monitor developments within this federation. (Acts Art. 118)*

## 2. Contact

The subcommittee maintained contact with the GKN through correspondence and a face-to-face meeting. The subcommittee received a copy of the letter from the Synod of the GKN held on 12 March 2016 addressed to GS Dunnville 2016. In this letter the GKN conveyed greetings and expressed the hope that contacts between the two churches could be maintained. The letter also confirmed that talks towards possible unity between them and the DGK were being initiated.

In a letter dated August 16, 2016 we informed the GKN of the decisions of GS Dunnville regarding our relationship with the GKN (Art 118). Also, a copy of the *Acts of Synod Dunnville 2016* in pdf format was forwarded to them for their information together with a request for a meeting with the deputies BBK of the GKN in the Netherlands in 2017.

Via email we received a press release of the above-mentioned synod of the GKN held 12 March, 2016. In further emails a meeting in person was arranged and finalized.

The full subcommittee had opportunity to meet with 5 Deputies BBK of the GKN on March 30, 2017 in the GKN church building *Elim*, in Ede, the Netherlands. The meeting was opened with Scripture reading and prayer. This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> time since our first appointment in 2010, that as CanRC deputies we met with representatives of the GKN. The brothers expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet again, and gave us an update on 1) the developments in their churches in particular on the internal structure of the GKN and 2) on the discussions with the DGK.

### The developments in their churches

A number of years ago the internal structure of the GKN was not very clear and didn’t work very well. The churches were quite independent. There was a national assembly, but it was not clear what the

jurisdiction/authority of this meeting was. The result was a loose and problematic cooperation between the churches.

This has changed and now their ecclesiastical life is better organized. As a result, the cooperation and harmony is much better. They are now structured in accordance with the C.O. of Dort. Because of the small size of the federation there are no classes or regional synods. The national meeting is a General Synod, which meets twice a year.

Since they could not reach an agreement on how to eliminate some of the differences among the local churches, the Synod concluded that these things were not reason for separation (“niet kerkscheidend”) and should therefore remain the responsibility of the local churches. And thus in some of the churches the sisters vote in the election of office bearers, in others they don’t. And not all churches use the same Marriage Form, nor have they approved the same hymns for singing in the worship services. This does not mean that all local churches are free to choose any hymn they would like to sing. The decision only accepts existing circumstances.

Recently another Synod was held. The brothers noticed with thankfulness the improved harmonious cooperation and the positive atmosphere, reflecting a much better unity. Synod had also appointed church visitors, and they could report encouraging meetings and conversations. “We can say with gratitude that we are now a very small, but flourishing church community”.

Currently the federation consists of 7 instituted churches and 6 preaching points. The churches are served by 3 fulltime-active ministers (Rev. Van der Wolf, Rev. L. Heres, and Rev. Visser). There are 3 ministers-emeritus (Dr. Douma and Rev. Hoogendoorn and Rev. D. de Jong [minister emeritus of Burlington Ebenezer]). One student is currently studying in Apeldoorn, and there may be a new student coming. Two more ministers recently left the GKv and joined the GKN one of which is Rev. A. De Jager who at one time served the church in Neerlandia as its minister.

The decisions about women’s voting and about the hymns in the liturgy has led some people to leave the GKN for DGK. That was difficult, but despite this – membership is overall quite stable. There is some slow growth, where here and there a GKv member is joining, but it is not a stream or a movement. The problem is that people are confused and they don’t know where to go. The brothers experienced that during the last years the gap between the GKN and the GKv has grown considerably.

#### Discussions with the DGK

The first request for a dialogue towards possible unity came from DGK. This first discussion was held (2015), but then further movement was put on hold. The GKN first wanted to address matters in the Acts of the DGK Synod that sounded like ‘pre-conditions’ which would hamper an open discussion. Misunderstandings could be clarified and in February of this year a continuation of the preliminary discussion was held. This resulted in a joint agreement that the foundation of the church is God’s Word and the Confession. The C.O. is important, but does not belong to that foundation. This ‘joint agreement’ can be found on their website. This is a positive and joyful development which was reported at the Synod of the GKN in March 2017.

#### General discussion

The subcommittee asked if there is mutual trust between the GKN and DGK, for instance with regard to what Dr. J. Douma [who is a minister-emeritus in the GKN] has written about Genesis 1?

The GKN brothers expressed their fear that deep down there is still general mistrust among the DGK when it comes to the GKN. It is clear that much prayer will be needed that the Holy Spirit may move this process forward, and also much wisdom and love. At the same time, they say, we need determination to hold fast to what we have received. The GKN brothers made it clear that they are driven by Christ’s command that those who believe in him must be one. One of the difficulties is that those who have left

the GKv, may have done so for a variety of reasons. However, the first motivation to keep going, they say, is not to form a joint haven for concerned members of the GKv, but to be obedient to the Lord's calling.

We suggested that, to avoid any misunderstanding in view of dr. Douma's writings, the GKN issue a clear statement on its position on creation and the first chapters in the book of Genesis.

We further encouraged the brothers as they embark on the road of discussions with the DGK and we expressed the hope for good results. They, in return, then emphasized that we should not look at them as just 2 wings, so to speak, of the same church, made up of ex-members of the GKv. We are talking about 2 real, full-fledged independent church federations.

In closing the GKN chairman of the meeting summed it up with positive remarks. "By God's grace we are doing well. Although we are small, we see spiritual growth in a country that slides more and more into darkness. And, yes, we do desire contacts with foreign churches, but our manpower and time is limited. If the sister church relationship between the CanRC and the GKv would indeed come to an end, we would love to have more contact. But right now we stand back. It will take time for you, the CanRC, to say farewell to the GKv in a proper way".

### **3. Recent Developments**

The GKN Synod October 2017 made a decision to terminate the discussions towards possible unity with the DGK. This was as the result of an article that appeared in the official DGK church magazine *De Bazuin* which appears to label the GKN as schismatic. The GKN demands that the DGK publicly distances itself from this article before talks can resume. Synod Lansingerland 2018 of the DGK responded that they have no preconditions that need to be met and urged the GKN to continue the dialogue and to discuss any concerns at these joint meetings of deputies for church unity.

At the meeting of General Synod March 17, 2018 deputies for contact with foreign churches reported on their work. They expressed the opinion that in contacts with other churches priority should be given to Europe and to former sister churches, the FRCA, the CanRC and the FRCSA. A decision was made to enter into a sister church relationship with the Selbständige Evangelisch Reformierte Kirche (SERK) in Germany. It was also decided to request the FRCA to enter into a sister church relationship. The intention was made clear that at the next general synod similar proposals need to be made to the CanRC and FRCSA.

### **4. Conclusion and Recommendation**

The subcommittee appreciates the difficulties that may exist in a small federation as well as the need for a soundboard. Further encouragement to seek unity with the DGK and with concerned GKV members will be valuable. Therefore, the sub-committee proposes that some form of contact be maintained with the GKN.

Rev. J. DeGelder  
 Rev. J. Moesker  
 G. J. Nordeman  
 Dr. C. Van Dam

### 8.2.2.3 CRCA Subcommittee Netherlands – GKv

## **REPORT SUBCOMMITTEE RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS FOR SYNOD EDMONTON 2019**

### **A. Mandate Synod Dunnville 2016**

Synod Dunnville 2016 reappointed the brothers Rev. J. DeGelder, Rev. J. Moesker, G. J. Nordeman, and Dr. C. VanDam to the Subcommittee for Relations Churches in the Netherlands (SRN). We were given the following mandate with regard to the GKv (Article 104, 4.4 of the Acts of Synod Dunnville):

- 4.4.1 To maintain contact with the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (BBK) of the GKv and represent the CanRC at the next GKv Synod;
- 4.4.2 To inform the next synod of the GKv in writing of GS 2016's decision;
- 4.4.3 To send a copy of this act of GS 2016 to each of the GKv churches, accompanied by a cover letter;
- 4.4.4 To monitor the work of the committee "Males / Females and Office", as well as the decisions of the next GKv Synod regarding this matter;
- 4.4.5 To monitor the ongoing discussions between the GKv and the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NGK);
- 4.4.6 To continue to observe developments at the Theological University of the GKv in Kampen (TUK), which includes paying attention to the article by Dr. Burger;
- 4.4.7 To monitor the results of the GKv's involvement with the National Synod;
- 4.4.8 To work in consultation with the deputies of our other sister-churches;
- 4.4.9 To report to the churches six months prior to GS 2019 giving special attention to the question whether or not to continue EF.

### **B. Concerning our mandate 4.4.1 to 4.4.4**

We met regularly and maintained open communication with the Deputies Relations Foreign Churches of the GKv (BBK) as well as with deputies of sister churches. In November 2015 the BBK sent us the official decisions of Synod Ede 2014 as well as a questionnaire which they sent to all sister churches intended to ascertain the practices in the sister churches concerning the role of women within those churches. We responded to the questionnaire as best we could (see Appendix A, p.8). On May 16, 2016, two members of the SRN met with the 2 representatives of the BBK who had been delegated to Synod Dunnville. The report of the SRN to Synod Dunnville was discussed, in particular the recommendation to suspend points 4 and 5 of the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Via the BBK we informed the GKv of the decisions of Synod Dunnville 2016. We also sent a copy of those decisions to all 269 GKv churches via email with a covering letter (see Appendix B, Letter to GKv consistories, p.10). We received little response from the churches to the material sent.

In October, 2016 the Deputies M/F of the GKv published their report for Synod Meppel 2017 entitled "Serving Together" ("Summary of the Report" in Appendix C with internet link to full report, p.17). We discussed this report and found that though it was better organized than the report to Synod Ede 2014, the 2016 report utilized the same basic approach to the interpretation of the Bible as the previous one and recommended that the offices be opened to women. We found the Biblical basis of the 2016 report as well as the view of the offices in the church seriously wanting. The SRN therefore sent the BBK of the GKv our reaction to only the Biblical

section of this report, this being the main issue (see Appendix D, “Response to the Biblical Grounds,” p.24). We also translated this report into Dutch.

In April 2017 the SRN travelled to the Netherlands to the “Foreign Delegates Week” organized for Synod Meppel at Mennorode over April 3-8, (see Appendix E, “Visit to Synod Meppel 2017 of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands” published in Clarion, V66, N22, p.31). We addressed synod on behalf of the CanRC (see Appendix F, “Address to Synod Meppel 2017, p.37). Though the SRN was not actually given the floor of synod with regard to concerns with the direction of the GKv and the report “Serving Together,” we were able to meet with most members of the Deputies M/F and delegates to Synod Meppel to express our Biblical concerns about that report. Though the discussions were open and frank, they were in camera and therefore not recorded in the proceedings of synod. As far as we understand, all the delegates of the sister churches expressed deep concern about the report “Serving Together.”

The GKv Synod advisory committee “Man, woman and office” sent the SRN a letter with some questions concerning those informal discussions to which they wished to receive reply by May 22. They felt that though much had been said in our meetings, there was also much that had not been said. And they stated, “We also had the impression that in the various rounds of discussion there was almost no attempt to seek common ground between our opinions and arguments.” The SRN did not see the need to seek common ground since we had presented the Biblical arguments as clearly as possible, and the GKv advisory committee had not interacted with those arguments in any meaningful way. We therefore simply sent the English and Dutch versions of our “Response to the Biblical Grounds” (Appendix D, p.24) as reply. The SRN was also invited to be present at the synod discussion of our “Response to the Biblical Grounds” on June 16. However, we declined for logistic and stewardship reasons and because we felt that we had done our best to present the Biblical arguments contra the report “Serving Together.”

In spite of serious concerns expressed on behalf of almost all the sister churches represented at Synod Meppel, that Synod decided in June 2017 that there are Scriptural grounds, besides men, to also call women to the offices of deacon, elder and minister (see decisions of Synod Meppel concerning this, Appendix G, p.40). The SRN has written an extensive response to this decision, “Response to Synod Meppel’s Decisions to Open all Ecclesiastical Offices to Women” (see Appendix H, p.50). The conclusion of this report is that the egalitarian culture of our times has had an enormous influence on Synod Meppel’s reasoning - reasoning which is not at all convincing in the actual light of Scripture. Scripture clearly assigns qualified men to the roles of minister, elder and deacon.

Synod Meppel also reacted to the decision of Synod Dunnville to scale down the relationship with the GKv and to suspend points 4 and 5 of the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (see Appendix I, p.63). They saw no need from their side to review the sister-church relationship and urged us not to close the door to discussion at synod level but to continue to serve one another especially when our insights differ. Among the grounds for that decision was Rule 1 for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, that as much as possible sister churches are to support each other in upholding and defending the Reformed Confessions, in accordance with Scripture, in doctrine, discipline and worship. However, this call for mutual support is hollow, as the concerns of CanRC Synods since 2006 as well as the letter of admonition of Synod Carman 2013 and the

serious concerns expressed by CanRC representatives to the GKv Synods since 2008 have not brought about any change in the direction of the GKv as far as Bible interpretation is concerned. In fact, Synod Meppel regards our concerns not a matter of Biblical import, but only a matter of differing in insight and in practice. Unlike Synod Meppel the CanRC does not view this to be a small issue, but a matter of faithfulness to the clear direction of Scripture and its authority and sufficiency for faith and life (Belgic Confession, Articles 5 and 7).

### **C. Concerning mandate 4.4.5**

As reported in “Developments in the Relationship Between the GKv and the NGK” (see Appendix J, p.65), there is in the GKv a growing sense of ‘unity in Christ’ with various other churches. This is not a unity based on the Scripture as confessed in the Reformed Confessions, but more a unity based on a mutual recognition as Christians. This can be seen in the growing list of contacts being advised and maintained by the GKv Deputies for Church Unity (DKE). Unity based on the Word as confessed in the Reformed Confessions is desired and obligated. However, it appears that there is a seeking of unity without due regard to the basis of true ecumenicity. According to the report of the DKE there was consultation with the NGK deputies about a number of matters, including a comparison of church orders, the issue of women in church office, the sacraments, opening pulpits to each other’s ministers, and the place of practicing homosexuals in church life. The majority of the DKE proposed a new “general regulation’ for cooperation of the GKv and NGK which would include the rule that the pulpits of the GKv would be open to the ministers of the NGK and that NGK members would be admitted to the GKv churches and their Lord’s Tables. However, three members of the DKE presented a minority report in which they presented a very critical analysis of the discussions. They concluded that the discussions have not dealt with the most crucial matters for the relationship, namely, the binding to the confession and how to deal with office bearers who disagree with parts of the confessions. These are issues which caused the NGK to split from the GKv 50 years ago. The SRN sees this as confirmation of its assertion in reports to General Synods Carman 2013 and Dunnville 2016 that it is not the NGK who have become more Reformed, but the deformation in the GKv have made them more like the NGK. It is regrettable that in its decisions about the relations with the NGK Synod Meppel simply ignored the analysis of the minority report.

On November 11, 2017, Synod Meppel and the National Assembly of the NGK met in Kampen. Speeches and workshops were organized and the day was concluded with a worship service and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The two main decisions taken at that time were:

1. To express the longing to become a single church federation as soon as possible, on the basis of the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions and organized according to the principles of the Reformed church order.
2. With an eye to that union, establish a “Management Group” to work out the logistics of becoming a single federation.

When churches unite on the solid basis of Scripture and confessions and according to the principles of the Reformed church order there is reason for thanksgiving. However, in the case of the planned unity of the GKv and NGK we have serious questions, based on the past reports of the DKE and decisions of synods of the GKv. The assertion that the churches have found each other by listening to what the Lord says in his Word sounds rather hollow, as both the GKv and

NGK have admitted women to office in spite of the clear directives of Scripture that only males are to be assigned church offices. Though it was decided in 2016 that the offices are not open to same-sex couples, they are generally welcomed to the Lord's Supper table as members in good standing if they live in a relationship of love and fidelity in spite of the clear norms of Scripture regarding same-sex relationships. We therefore deny that a union GKv-NGK would truly be based on the Word of God.

Additionally, the claim that a GKv–NGK unity is based on the Reformed confessions is not justified, as there has been no clear and common understanding of what subscription to the Reformed confessions actually entails. This was one of the main reasons for the split in the past. Finally, the decision to seek unity on the basis of the Reformed church order without working out at least the main tenets of such a Reformed church order is very questionable, especially with a church which does not really have a church order. The NGK does not have an actual church order as basis of the federation but a much looser national agreement between churches which leaves much to the freedom of the local churches. Hence, we do not see this GKv decision to move toward unity as a positive development, but rather as a move away from its stated basis and principles.

The coming together of the GKv and NGK does not inspire confidence that the GKv are moving forward on a Biblical and Reformed path. On the contrary, we believe that these churches are continuing to turn away from the clear directives of God's Word and the Reformed Confessions.

#### **D. Concerning mandate 4.4.6**

In December 2016 we received a letter from the BBK of the GKv concerning the TUK (see Appendix K, p.70). This document offered the assurance that “the pointing out of God's lasting regulations for our lives requires, also in our culture, scripturally secured wisdom and sensitivity.” We were not reassured by this statement, considering how the prevailing culture has impacted the interpretation of the Bible at the GKv Synod.

For example, we were not reassured by some of the writings in the 2017 publication of TUK faculty entitled *Gereformeerde Hermeneutiek Vandaag*. In this volume Prof. Ad de Bruijne, one of the editors of this publication, emphasizes that we need to interact with the Word of God in ethical judgments but at the same time he opens the door to ethical judgments that could contradict the clear directives of Scripture. He also suggests that not all the ethical insight Christians need can be found in Scripture but can possibly be discovered in general revelation. The SRN's full critique of Prof. de Bruijne's article can be found in Appendix L, p.126. Following this professor's reasoning one might anticipate that the legitimization of homosexual relationships may very well be the next step in the GKv. Synod Meppel, in one of its final sessions in November 2017 appointed deputies to study whether there is reason to modify the traditional ecclesiastical way of dealing with homosexuality.

The SRN was also instructed by Synod Dunnville to pay attention to an article of Dr. J. M. Burger of the TUK in a 2014 publication: *Cruciaal: de verrassende betekenis van Jezus' kruisiging* in which he wrote an article about the atonement which many consider an undermining of the actual sacrifice of Christ. We addressed a letter to Dr. Burger on July 12, 2016 (see Appendix M, p.79). This letter contained two basic questions concerning his article:

Did we misrepresent him in our critique contained in our report to Synod Dunnville?” and “Have you since revised your views and publicly withdrawn your contested views as published in *Cruciaal?*” We received a reply from Dr. Burger in March 2017 in which he explained that what he wrote was from a cultic rather than judicial point of view of Jesus’ sacrifice. He also stated that he maintains what he wrote in the article because no one has shown him why his views should be withdrawn (see Appendix N, p.82). Prompted by his reply, we sent another letter critiquing Dr. Burger’s reasoning and pointing out that he needs to clarify and revise what he wrote to remove the confusion that has ensued about his views not only with the SRN but also others (see Appendix O, p.87). To date no response to this letter has been received.

As these discussions and communications show, our concern about what is being done at the TUK remains. In April 2017 Synod Meppel decided to work positively towards the establishment of a Reformed Theological University (GTU) which would include the TUK and the Theological University of Apeldoorn (TUA) of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK). However, in July 2017 the Synod of the CGK decided that the TUA would not be part of a GTU. This demonstrates that others share our concerns with the direction of the TUK. In conclusion, the SRN has seen a continued erosion of its confidence in the direction the TUK is taking. With its acceptance of new methods of Bible interpretation this institution is following a path away from the authority and sufficiency and normativity of the Word of God, the gospel of life in Christ.

#### **E. Concerning mandate 4.4.7**

As outlined in the report “Involvement of the GKv with the National Synod in the Netherlands (see Appendix P, p.91), GKv deputies have been attending the “National Synod” at the city of Dort. This body consists of delegates from a wide variety of Protestant churches in the Netherlands. Though it was primarily intended to be a discussion platform to meet and to discuss theological and ecclesiastical issues without commitments or obligations, at the 2016 meeting it was proposed that participating churches enter into some type of covenant. Voices raised at that time favoured the reception of one another’s ministers and each other’s members at the Lord’s Supper celebrations.

Synod Meppel has instructed the DKE to continue to participate in this body and if possible to even join the proposed covenant of Protestant churches in the Netherlands, taking into consideration obedience to God’s Word and the value of the Reformed confessions. The original National Synod of Dort 400 years ago was held to defend the unity of Reformed churches on the basis of Scripture and Confessions, including the Canons of Dort. But this assembly, composed of representatives of very different churches including the Remonstrant Brotherhood, is apparently seeking a different kind of unity, a superficial unity not based on Scripture and Reformed Confessions, in particular the Canons of Dort. We therefore believe that by participating in this gathering the GKv is compromising its stand for the truth of God’s Word as summarized in the Reformed Confessions.

#### **F. Concerning mandate 4.4.8**

The SRN maintained contact with the deputies of sister churches, especially when the reports for Synod Meppel were made available, in particular the report “Serving Together.” At Synod Meppel we had opportunity to meet with and to converse with deputies of the Free Reformed

Churches of Australia, the Reformed Churches in Brazil, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, the Free Church of Scotland, and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). We were thankful that our sister churches shared our concerns about the report of Deputies M/F and the decision of Synod Meppel. The GKv has unquestionably ignored the concerns of their sister churches throughout the world, as evident in the decision to open ecclesiastical offices to females.

This also became apparent at the July meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches in Jordan Station, ON (Appendix Q, “Press Release ICRC 2017,” p.93). Members of the SRN were present and interacted with representatives of sister churches and many Reformed churches throughout the world. This body decided almost unanimously to suspend the GKv from the ICRC due to the decision to admit females to all church offices. The suspension was based on the constitution of the ICRC. We noticed during the discussion that many of the representatives of Reformed churches were quite taken aback at the grounds for Synod Meppel’s decision. The chairman of Synod Meppel was present to defend the GKv decision.

Our sister churches (as well as many Reformed non-sister churches abroad) share our conviction that the GKv are deviating from Scripture as shown by the permission to ordain females to church offices. In spite of serious warnings via numerous representatives and urgent letters of admonition from the CanRC and other churches throughout the world, there has been no evidence of a reversal of direction in the GKv. Instead of standing firm with long-standing and trusted sister churches, the GKv has shown it is ready to pursue contacts and relationships with churches and organizations which do not submit fully to the Word of God. Some of our sister churches such as the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand have already therefore decided to terminate their relationship with the GKv.

#### **G. Concerning mandate 4.4.9**

The GKv acknowledge in various letters and reports that they as churches and as federation have changed over the past few years. We do not see all those changes as positive, in particular the changes in Bible interpretation and application. Though we are thankful for faithful voices in the GKv, we have to report with much sadness that the GKv as federation has continued to move away from a submission to the authoritative, sufficient and clear Word of God and has more and more accommodated itself to 21<sup>st</sup> century western culture. This movement has taken place over time, but it has come to a real watershed with the decision of Synod Meppel to permit the ordination of females to office. We therefore assert that we can no longer look to the GKv for help and support in the CanRC’s stand against the man-centred and post-truth western culture in which we exist and which we need to resist in order to hold fast to our covenant God and the salvation and life he has promised in Jesus Christ in his Word. Our recommendation is therefore that the CanRC discontinue the relationship with the GKv.

#### **H. Recommendations**

1. Synod decide: to discontinue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKv.

Grounds:

- a. The decision by Synod Meppel 2017 to admit females to ecclesiastical office is contrary to Scripture as shown in Appendix H of our report.

- b. It is highly unlikely that this decision will be reversed on appeal to the next general synod since Synod Meppel decided that the churches could ordain female office bearers immediately, and since the NGK with whom the GKv are in the process of uniting have been allowing female ordination for some time already.
  - c. By the decision to permit female ordination the GKv has ignored the numerous warnings about unbiblical hermeneutics directed to their synods by the SRN as well as delegates of other sister churches since Synod Zwolle 2008. The GKv has also brushed aside the serious admonitions directed to Synod Ede by Synod Carman 2013 concerning the place of those unbiblical hermeneutics at the TUK as well as in the report Deputies M/F.
  - d. The decision of Synod Meppel to work towards full unity with the NGK shows that the GKv have moved in the direction of those churches which have also opened the offices to females and which allow same-sex couples to remain members in good standing.
  - e. The decision of Synod Meppel 2017 to continue to take part in the wide ecumenical forum of Dutch Protestant churches at the National Synod in the Netherlands is concerning. This forum has moved to discussing some type of eventual union of all participating churches, so GKv involvement displays a weakening of commitment to true Reformed ecumenicity based on Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.
  - f. A decision to discontinue the relationship with the GKv is consistent with maintaining relations with churches with which we presently have Ecclesiastical Fellowship as well as membership in the ICRC and NAPARC. The GKv membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches has been suspended because of the decision to allow females to be ordained to office. Some of our sister churches have also terminated their relationship with the GKv and within NAPARC the OPC and the URCNA have ceased contact with the GKv due to female ordination.
  - g. A decision to discontinue the relationship with the GKv would be an encouragement to faithful members within the GKv to take action, and it would be a final call to the GKv as a whole to take stock of the direction of those churches which once stood with us on the same basis of Scripture and Reformed Confessions.
  - h. Severing ties with the GKv is the only responsible course of action in view of the spiritual wellbeing of the CanRC, which would otherwise be vulnerable to the unbiblical thinking which is becoming more and more evident in the GKv.
2. Upon accepting Recommendation 1., Synod also decide: to thank and discharge the SRN as subcommittee of the CRCA responsible for relations with churches in the Netherlands.
  3. Upon accepting Recommendation 1., Synod also decide: to appoint a CRCA delegation to attend the next Synod of the GKv to communicate its decision with appropriate words of sadness concerning this breaking with the churches with which we share such deep roots.

J. deGelder  
 J. Moesker  
 G. J. Nordeman  
 C. Van Dam

## APPENDIX A

**RESPONSE OF SUBCOMMITTEE RELATIONS CHURCHES IN THE  
NETHERLANDS OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES TO THE  
REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS (LIBERATED)  
QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING MALE/FEMALE IN THE CHURCH**

Responses in italics

A. Activities of women in the church

1. Which tasks and/or activities are carried out by women in the churches of your denomination?  
*Every church has a ladies aid, a group of women which engage in such activities as raising money for church purposes (i.e. building renovations), supplying domestic type aid to members in need of help (i.e. meals for sick), organizing events and preparing meals and refreshments for socials or for church assemblies, etc.*
2. To what extent are women present at church council meetings, do they have a say and influence?  
*Women can be invited to council meetings and they are consulted in matters which pertain to the church as a whole (i.e. calling of a minister, church building).*
3. Are there any committees or tasks done only by men or only by women?  
*There is in general no committee or task restricted to men or women only.*

B. Discussions

1. What discussions have there been or are still going on at a formal level (at the General Synod/Assembly, in the congregations or other meetings)?  
*Assuming that the question pertains to the role of women, there has been considerable discussion surrounding women's voting in the election of officebearers. Synod 2010 declared that the churches were free to permit women's voting but Synod 2013 overturned that decision. There has been some issue with female leadership in some school societies, though women are active in all these societies.*
2. To what extent have the following issues played a role in these discussions:
  - a. faithful and obedient Bible reading?  
*This has been a major factor in the discussion, mainly texts surrounding male headship and the silence of women passages.*
  - b. church history and traditions?  
*As the Bible has no explicit command concerning women's voting, this has also played a large role in the discussion.*
  - c. the influence of society on the thinking and acting of Christians?  
*The role of women in society in general has changed, but this does not have a huge influence in the discussion.*
  - d. the special and complementary differences between men and women?  
*There is a general understanding and acceptance that men and women are equal with respect to salvation in Christ (Gal. 3:28) but distinct and complementary as regards to roles in family and church (Eph. 5:22ff, 1 Tim. 2&3).*

## B. Decisions

1. Have any decisions been made regarding the calling and the right of women to use their gifts? If so, please send us the text of those decisions.  
*The only specific decisions concerning a calling or right of women to use their gifts are those about women's voting (Synod Burlington 2010 and Synod Carman 2013).*
7. Which tasks / functions are exclusively carried out by men? *The church offices are exclusively carried out by men, though the aid of the women in the congregation is occasionally requested in carrying out those responsibilities (i.e. by deacons). What ground do you have for this? The Biblical texts which refer to the silence of women in the church (1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy) and the (male) requirements for the offices (Timothy and Titus). This was reflected in the report of the CanRC Subcommittee Relations Netherlands to Synod Carman of the CanRC 2013 (Appendix 1).*
8. Who has ultimate responsibility for the possible contribution of women in the church (Sunday school, catechism classes, preaching, etc.) or in other teaching / leadership roles?  
*The council (or consistory) has the ultimate responsibility for the contribution of women in the church.*
9. How is that ultimate responsibility put into practice?  
*The council (or consistory) normally has supervision over the activities of the church and that provision is usually included in the mandates for the various groups or committees.*
10. Are there congregations in your federation which have taken decisions on this subject that are not in line with the position of your General Synod / Assembly?  
*At present there are some churches which have implemented women's voting and are in the process of appealing the 2013 decision concerning this.*

## D. Informal affairs and beliefs

1. What opinions live in the community about the calling and the right of women to use their gifts?  
*Women have the calling and right to use their gifts as in the office of all believers (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12), though not as ordained officebearers.*
2. What opinions live specifically among women about their calling and gifts?  
*Generally the women believe that there is plenty of opportunity to make use of their calling and gifts in the churches. There are possibly some who wish they could take on more responsibilities, but generally there is acceptance of the traditional roles of men and women.*
3. Do you notice a development in thinking and in practice with regard to the functioning of women?  
*Over the past decades there has been an increase in the acceptance of women in various roles in the church community.*
4. How is this development interpreted?  
*This development has generally been regarded as positive, since the role of women in the past has not always been interpreted in a way that acknowledges their calling and gifts. However, there is also apprehension about the influence of the women's liberation movement in North American culture.*

**APPENDIX B****Canadian Reformed Churches  
CRCA Sub-Committee on Relations with Churches in the Netherlands**

October 18, 2016

To the consistories of the Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)  
in the Netherlands

Dear brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ

General Synod Dunnville 2016 of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) has completed its task and is no more.

One of the decisions of this synod dealt with the sister church relationship the CanRC have maintained for more than 60 years with the Reformed Churches, liberated (GKv/RCN). In view of ongoing developments within the GKv Synod Dunnville decide to temporarily suspend rules 4 and 5 of the Regulations for Ecclesiastical Fellowship ((EF) = Sister Church Relations).

This means in practical terms that (travel) attestations will no longer be accepted automatically and without reservation (rule 4), and pulpits in the CanRC will no longer be open as a matter of course for ministers in the GKv and possible calls to GKv ministers will need the concurring advice of a CanRC Classis (rule 5).

GS Dunnville instructed the Deputies for Relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to inform General Synod Meppel 2017 and each local GKv church of this decision. We have attached the full text of this decision, Art. 104 *Acts of GS Dunnville 2016* as Appendix 1 to this letter.

It is our prayer that this correspondence may contribute to a further reflection on the seriousness of the matter we, the CanRC, herewith bring to your attention.

With brotherly greetings,  
for the CRCA-SRN



Gerard J. Nordeman  
Secretary CRCA-SRN

## **Article 104 – GKv (Reformed Churches in The Netherlands<sup>1</sup>)**

Advisory Committee 1 presented its report. The report was discussed. During discussion the following amendments were moved and seconded:

### Amendment 1

To replace “To inform the GKv via the BBK of our decision”

With “To inform the next synod of the GKv in writing of GS 2016’s decision”

### **ADOPTED**

### Amendment 2

To insert between 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 “To send a copy of this act of GS 2016 to each of the GKv churches accompanied by a cover letter.”

### **ADOPTED**

## **1. Material**

- 1.1 CRCA Subcommittee for Contact with Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CRCA-SRN) (8.2.3.1), including the appendices (8.2.3.2-7)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Burlington-Rehoboth (8.3.1.1.1), Smithers (8.3.1.1.2), Chatham (8.3.1.1.3), Grand Valley (8.3.1.1.4), Langley (8.3.1.1.5), Ancaster (8.3.1.1.6), Fergus-North (8.3.1.1.7), Edmonton-Immanuel (8.3.1.1.8), Fergus Maranatha (8.3.1.1.9), Glanbrook-Trinity (8.3.1.1.10), Grand Rapids (8.3.1.1.11), Taber (8.3.1.1.12), Abbotsford (8.3.1.1.13), Grassie-Covenant (8.3.1.1.14), Cloverdale (8.3.1.1.15), Brampton (8.3.1.1.16), Elora (8.3.1.1.17), Burlington-Ebenezer (8.3.1.1.18), Toronto-Bethel (8.3.1.1.19), Hamilton-Blessings (8.3.1.5), and Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.1.7)

## **2. Observations**

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 148) decided to reappoint the CRCA-SRN with the following mandate:
  - [4.1.1] To maintain contact with BBK<sup>2</sup> of the RCN and represent the CanRC at the next synod of the RCN. If possible, the CRCA subcommittee should be present when this Synod’s letter is dealt with by the next Synod of the RCN;
  - [4.1.2] To inform BBK of our decision concerning female delegates;
  - [4.1.3] To continue to observe developments at the TUK<sup>3</sup>;
  - [4.1.4] To monitor the work of the Deputies concerning the Role of Women in the Church and assess their report as well as the decisions of the next Synod of the RCN regarding that report;

---

<sup>1</sup> In reports and acts the acronyms RCN and RCN(I) can also be found.

<sup>2</sup> The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad of the RCN

<sup>3</sup> The Theological University of the RCN at Kampen.

- [4.1.5] To monitor the ongoing unity discussions between the RCN and the NRC<sup>4</sup> and to review the decisions of the next Synod of the RCN regarding unity with the NRC;
- [4.1.6] To review the results of the revision of the RCN Church Order;
- [4.1.7] To monitor the results of the RCN's involvement with the "National Synod";
- [4.1.8] To monitor the developments regarding the application of Article 67 of the RCN Church Order;
- [4.1.9] To work in consultation with the deputies FRCA and OPC;
- [4.1.10] To report to the churches six months prior to General Synod 2016 giving special attention to the question whether or not we continue in EF.

## 2.2 Concerns about the GKv have been expressed by our synods over the past few decades.

- 2.2.1 1998: Synod agreed with the concerns expressed regarding commitment to the authority of Scripture and confessions, deviations regarding the doctrine of Christ's suffering, and an article dealing with homosexuality (GS 1998 (CanRC), Art. 40, Cons. III.6; Rec. IV.G).
- 2.2.2 2001: Synod noted concerns about the marriage form recently adopted by GS 1999 (GKv) and mandated the CRCA to discuss the changes with the Dutch deputies (GS 2001 (CanRC), Art. 80, Rec. 5.3.2). Synod also mandated the CRCA to study the concerns expressed about the GKv to see whether the point has been reached that a warning is needed that the GKv are deviating from the Reformed basis in Scripture and the Reformed confessions (GS 2001 (CanRC), Art. 80, Rec. 5.3.3).
- 2.2.3 2004: Synod expressed concerns as well. In addition, it stated: "The letters from the churches show that there is concern within our churches about the situation in the GKv. It is important to keep in mind that we should not judge the GKv on the basis of what we know from personal observations, hearsay, or from articles in papers, but on the basis of its official documents." (GS 2004 (CanRC), Art. 44, Cons. 4.9).
- 2.2.4 2007: Synod maintained that there was enough reason to monitor the situation in the Netherlands. Further, it stated, "A church federation must be given time to work through the issues confronting it. If deviation is present, it will manifest itself eventually in the official decisions of churches. By carefully following the developments in the GKv in terms of the issues being dealt with by various deputies and in Reports, the committee should be able to keep a finger on the pulse of the GKv. While the committee can be encouraged to read more than just the official documents to get a sense of what is happening, judgments about situations must be based on the official documents." (GS 2007 (CanRC), Art. 133, Cons. 4.9)
- 2.2.5 2010: The concerns increased to the extent that a separate subcommittee was set up. It was charged to express grave concerns about the teaching at the TUK and about a change in how biblical hermeneutics are functioning the GKv (GS 2010 (CanRC), Art. 86, Rec. 4.4).
- 2.2.6 2013: Synod decided to send a letter of admonition directly to GS 2014 (GKv) because of

---

<sup>4</sup> The Netherlands Reformed Churches (NGK)

continued growing concerns (GS 2013 (CanRC), Art. 165).

- 2.3 GS 2014 (GKv) responded by letter to the CanRC letter of admonition. GS 2014 (GKv) expressed appreciation for the letter as an expression of love but defended the position of the GKv with regard to the matters mentioned in our letter of admonition.
- 2.4 Reactions from the churches:
- 2.4.1 Several churches indicate general support for the direction the committee proposes. Some of the items mentioned by the churches are:
- many warnings have been issued by our past synods;
  - it sends a strong signal to the GKv and adds a further clear warning;
  - the recommendation to restrict our EF will be an encouragement to faithful members of the GKv.
- 2.4.2 Several churches propose specific changes to amend recommendation 2 to the extent that the next general synod will make a decision about terminating our EF.
- 2.4.3 Langley proposes to suspend EF with the GKv rather than restrict it.
- 2.4.4 Cloverdale disagrees with the recommendation to restrict EF and instead proposes notice be given to the GKv that the EF will be terminated at GS 2019 (CanRC) unless there is meaningful change in the direction of the GKv. They note that the proposed restriction would create a new class of EF and “would punish visitors for the sins of the broader assemblies.”
- 2.4.5 Glanbrook-Trinity indicates that a synod should not be advising consistories as to their role in advising their members who are travelling to the Netherlands.
- 2.4.6 Hamilton-Blessings regrets that the Rev. Dr. Hans Burger was not contacted by the CRCA and indicates that his views are misrepresented in the report to synod. They propose that synod acknowledge this publicly.
- 2.4.7 Flamborough observes that the CRCA met its mandate to work closely with the deputies of the FRCA and the OPC.
- 2.4.8 Grand Rapids supports the EF restriction as a minimum, but sees the case for complete suspension at this time. They indicate that in any case the EF should be terminated by GS 2019 (CanRC) if the situation in The Netherlands has not improved.
- 2.4.9 Burlington-Ebenezer supports both recommendations of the CRCA and gives 2 Thess. 3:13-15 as guidance.
- 2.5 The CRCA-SRN recommends to restrict our sister relationship with the GKv. This more limited relationship should be understood as follows:
- 2.5.1 Rules 4 and 5 for EF which deal with the automatic acceptance of attestations from the GKv and the privilege of the pulpit for GKv ministers are to be considered null and void. Consistories are urged to exercise due diligence to ensure that those whose attestations

from the GKv are accepted are sound in doctrine and conduct. Should a church desire to call a minister from the GKv, the concurring advice of classis is required before such a call is issued. In the case of visiting ministers from the GKv, consistories are urged to exercise careful diligence and should be fully assured of the sound doctrine and the godly life of the minister involved. Furthermore, consistories should advise their members who are travelling to The Netherlands not to automatically join a GKv congregation but to be discerning where they worship.

- 2.5.2 If GS 2017 (GKv) makes a clear statement indicating that these churches are returning to acknowledging the full authority of Scripture and show that commitment by as yet acting on our concerns expressed in the letter of admonition from GS 2013 (CanRC) regarding the TUK, women in office, and other matters such as homosexuality mentioned in our reports, the normal sister relationship will resume. If, however, GS 2017 (GKv) maintains the present course of deformation then by that very fact this Synod will break the relationship of the GKv with the CanRC and the CanRC will consider the sister relationship to have ended.

### **3. Considerations**

- 3.1. From the report of the committee it can be concluded that the committee fulfilled its mandate. The committee is to be commended for the amount of work it did and the clarity with which they presented their findings.
- 3.2. The report indicates that, in spite of the warnings by our deputies and the letter of admonition to GS 2014 (GKv), there is no evidence of returning to the full authority of Scripture regarding the items mentioned in the letter; for example, the teachings at the TUK, women in office, relations with the NGK. This is also supported by the official letter from the GS 2014 (GKv). In fact, the report from the CRCA-SRN shows that the GKv has gone further in challenging the full authority of Scripture. The report speaks of a “course of deformation.” We note this with sad and heavy hearts.
- 3.3 The GKv delegates to the GS 2016 (CanRC) indicated that the GKv understand the concerns of the CanRC but feel that the recommendations of the sub-committee are premature (see address, Appendix # 10). They urged this synod to wait till the next synod of the GKv. It is true that the matter of women in office for example, has not yet been concluded in the ecclesiastical assemblies of the GKv. It will be important for our deputies to monitor this development, also in light of the request of the GKv for input by the sister churches. In regard to the main concern of the CanRC, the apparent lack of authority of Scripture, there is no indication of change since GS 2013 (CanRC).
- 3.4 The above outlined history (see Obs. 2.2), as well as the first reason of the subcommittee report (p. 68), show that the CanRC have addressed these concerns over a prolonged period of time. The overview also shows that the CanRC have exercised patience in following due process.
- 3.5 The CanRC have a deep and rich, common history with the GKv. Over many years we have worked together and we recognize the bond we have with many faithful brothers and sisters in the GKv. We also share in several mission projects. The Bible, however, also calls us to speak the truth in love when we have concerns and we are required to address them in accordance with our rules of EF.
- 3.6 Synod recognizes that the GKv is facing many challenges in its Dutch context. To one degree or

another, however, we all live in a cultural context that is hostile to God's Word. Nevertheless, the authority of Scripture transcends culture and needs to be maintained in any cultural context.

3.7 Because the situation within the GKv at the local level is "fluid" and there are many differences in practice between local churches when it comes to, for example, living common law, practicing homosexuals, and women in office, the CanRC can no longer automatically accept statements made by local consistories of the GKv. For this reason, it would be prudent to temporarily suspend the operation of the EF rules 4 and 5. These rules are:

4. The churches shall accept one another's attestations or certificates of good standing, which also means admitting members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation or certificate.

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

Synod agrees with the SRN recommendation that "consistories are urged to exercise due diligence to ensure that those whose attestations from the GKv are accepted are sound in doctrine and conduct."

3.8 It must be clear that this suspension of these two rules does not mean that EF with the GKv has ended but rather is under strain. This is a temporary situation in the hope that, under God's grace, this suspension can be undone when there is evidence of change within the GKv churches.

3.9 Synod is not in agreement with the committee's suggestion that if GS 2017 (GKv) maintains the present course of deformation, then, by that very fact, this GKv synod will break the EF. Synod agrees with the churches which have pointed this out. As to the suggestion of several churches that Synod mandate GS 2019 (CanRC) to make a decision about terminating our EF with the GKv, it is not within the jurisdiction of this synod to mandate a future synod to do this. It is our hope and prayer that breaking EF will not be necessary.

3.10 The report of the SRN identifies several serious concerns regarding an article by the Rev. Dr. Burger, lecturer of systematic theology at the TUK. Hamilton-Blessings questions the findings of the report. It would be important for the SRN to further investigate these concerns. The letter of Hamilton-Blessings should be forwarded to the SRN.

#### **4. Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express thankfulness for the Subcommittee for Reformed churches in The Netherlands of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA-SRN) for their work;
- 4.2 To express thankfulness and joy to the Lord for much faithfulness in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) as well as grief and disquiet over tolerance of deviations from Scripture and confession;
- 4.3 To continue EF with the GKv, with the temporary suspension of the operation of EF rules 4 and 5;
- 4.4 To mandate the CRCA-SRN:

- 4.4.1 To maintain contact with the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (BBK) of the GKv and represent the CanRC at the next GKv Synod;
- 4.4.2 To inform the next synod of the GKv in writing of GS 2016's decision;
- 4.4.3 To send a copy of this act of GS 2016 to each of the GKv churches accompanied by a cover letter;
- 4.4.4 To monitor the work of the committee "Males / Females and Office" as well as the decisions of the next GKv Synod regarding this matter;
- 4.4.5 To monitor the ongoing discussions between the GKv and the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NGK);
- 4.4.6 To continue to observe developments at the Theological University of the GKv in Kampen (TUK), this includes paying attention to the article by the Rev. Dr. Burger;
- 4.4.7 To monitor the results of the GKv's involvement with the National Synod;
- 4.4.8 To work in consultation with the deputies of our other sister churches;
- 4.4.9 To report to the churches six months prior to GS 2019 giving special attention to the question whether or not we continue in EF.

## APPENDIX C

### Serving together

Summary of the report *Male/Female and the Offices*

**The Deputies *M/F and the Offices* have submitted their Final Report to the General Synod of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands. What follows is a summary of this extensive report, which conveys its thrust and broad outlines.**

*This summary ought not to be regarded as a substitute for the report; instead, it is intended to provide information to the general public. For the benefit of those who wish to have more in-depth information, we refer frequently to the various chapters of our report itself.*

*An authorized English translation of the full report is to be found at [www.gkv.nl/organisatie/generale-synode/gs-2017/english-materials-gs-2017](http://www.gkv.nl/organisatie/generale-synode/gs-2017/english-materials-gs-2017)*

The Deputies *M/F and the Office*:

mr. dr. A. Haan-Kamminga, chairperson

dr. J.P. de Vries, secretary

prof. dr. E.A. de Boer

E.J. de Jong-Wilts MA

H.S. Nederveen-Van Veelen BTh

prof. dr. C.J. de Ruijter

dr. W.F. Wisselink

## **Introduction**

Since we believe it is important for Synod to come to a decision, we aim to provide a number of building blocks. These building blocks will assist the Synod to determine its own position and make a choice.

First and most of all, we want to listen to what the Bible says about men and women, and about the offices. Next, we will examine the history of the offices. In addition, we will review past and current practice in the churches, and the thinking concerning the offices among sister churches in our own country and abroad. In the conclusion of the report, we present an overview of our proposal to the Synod.

### **Biblical building blocks**

In Chapter 2 of our report we show what the Bible tells us about the way women may serve. It is clear that the Bible provides no direct answer to the question whether women may serve in the offices. The manner in which we as churches have organized the work of the offices also does not arise directly from the Bible.

On the other hand, we do find in the Bible clear guidelines for how women are to serve. We read of the gifts of women that are put to work as prophetess, apostle, deacon and judge. In the Bible, men and women have equal value, but they are not the same. God has created men and women differently, and has given them to each other. Together, they have been assigned the task of caring for and developing the world. Within this shared responsibility it is the man's task to lead. This is a matter of bearing Christ's authority, and a willingness to serve in complete submission to him. This does not mean that the man is to lord it over the woman. The texts that refer to the headship of the man point to a desire for reciprocal service, each in their distinctiveness as man and woman. Here, the Bible shows two lines: we see women who speak freely, while simultaneously we read texts indicating that women are to be silent. In our opinion, it is clear that these texts are intended to prevent that men or women would dominate, and in this way distort the shared responsibility that they have. Hence, the Bible does not help us with any direct instruction concerning the division of roles and tasks between men and women, then or now.

When we read what the Bible says about the leadership of the congregation, and who is to lead, the picture that emerges is no clearer. In the Bible we see a large

number of different tasks and roles, among which the role of 'elder' is consistently important for the leadership of the church. In this way, it becomes clear that there are special offices, given by God to the congregation. People holding special offices lead the congregation on its way to the kingdom of God.

### **History**

In the history of the churches the Bible has always been the basis for the institution and organization of the offices. That is what Chapter 3 of our report deals with. In the case of the special offices, it has always been important that next to an inner calling, there is also to be an external one. Anyone who becomes an office bearer has to be chosen and ordained by the congregation. In this way it can be seen that whoever provides leadership to the congregation has special gifts and is given special responsibility.

In the confessions of the church there was never a choice to exclude women from the offices. The fact that the offices were open to men only, also came about because of the way that society and its government were organized. Hence, it was taken for granted that women did not receive an office, just as it was in society at large. In the Bible, however, we see that next to men, there are also women who serve in special offices.

We do not find in the Bible a compelling 'no', keeping all offices closed to women at all times and in all places. This means that readers of the Bible, the congregation, and the churches together have to make their own choices for an organization of the offices and the forms in which men and women serve together.

That gives Synod the room to think freely about which course to follow; it implies that other considerations may play a role in coming to such a course.

### **The worldwide church.**

Chapter 5 of our report deals with the thinking and views that exist in sister churches within the Netherlands and abroad. We stand in relation to the church of all times and places. We recognize this in the contacts we have had with sister churches of the GKv. Most sister churches abroad, with very few exceptions, express deep reservations concerning the admission of women to the offices. A number of sister churches have even indicated that, should the GKv decide to follow this direction, this will have consequences for our sister church relations. These same reservations are also present among sister churches in the Netherlands, except for the NGK. We believe it is important that the relationship

we have with other churches is based on the Bible and our confessional documents. Hence, it is not inconceivable that local congregations will make different choices concerning the organization of the offices and the division of tasks and talents.

### **Practice**

Chapter 4 of our report deals with current practice in the churches. As churches, we stand in a society in which men and women increasingly have equal opportunities for education and employment. In all kinds of places, and in all kinds of roles, we observe the gifts of the Spirit among both men and women. Women too develop their talents in education, leadership, administration and jurisprudence. Women feel themselves to be called, and are called, to tasks in the church, and our analysis of prevailing practice shows that they increasingly respond to this calling.

The argument is commonly expressed that men and women are different, and therefore ought to fulfil different roles and tasks in the church. While it is true that research in this field is still very much in progress, it is clear enough that the differences between men and women correlate very strongly with their social and cultural environment. We therefore believe that it is more important to look for the gifts that have been given to men and women as individuals. In doing so, we also want to take into consideration how we, in our time and culture, may give expression to our shared calling as man and woman.

Our investigation into current practice has also taught us that where a member of the congregation assumes a special responsibility, this often occurs without any thought being given to an inner calling or an outward ordination. In doing so, we do not give sufficient attention to the spiritual dimensions of the work of the offices.

### **Setting a course**

The basis for our advice lies in the Bible, which makes it clear that it is God's will that both men and women are to be deployed in the service of the gospel. In this, the man is to serve in leadership.

Our report shows clearly that the structure of the offices, as we know them today, while derived from the Bible, is no longer in line with the manner in which gifts and talents are presently employed. Hence, we recommend to Synod to create more room for the deployment of the gifts and talents of women when they are called to special tasks in the office, and to choose a wise course for the future in

its weighing of options.

How this choice is actually to be put into practice is yet to be determined. Our advice is that we give each church the room to decide for itself the tempo and the route by which it will utilize all the gifts and talents at its disposal. Each church also ought to test for itself whether the calling of men and women is also a spiritual calling.

We realize that the course we recommend is a controversial one. A different manner of speaking about men, women and the offices incorporates a break with the past. For many members such a change of course will be a painful one, the more deeply felt because it clashes with the way many of us have read and understood Scripture itself.

We hope that the approach we took in describing and discussing relevant Bible texts has shown that we truly have searched for the will of God for his church and its members. This has given us the boldness to be at peace with these breaks with the past. It is for the members of the churches to seek each other in Christ, to want to understand each other, and to carry each other on the way to the completion of God's plan for this world.

### **Possible options**

In order to make our advice more concrete, we outline a number of options below. In Chapter 6.5 of our report, each of these options is worked out in more detail, and accompanied by our evaluation.

#### **a. No change, the offices remain closed to women.**

This is the most conservative option possible; on paper, it would leave the present situation unchanged.

*As Deputies we do not evaluate this option positively. This choice ignores current practice, which shows that women already participate in many tasks relating to teaching and church development, without however being ordained to these tasks.*

#### **b. Leave the offices unchanged, open the office of deacon to women.**

This option would provide room for women to fulfil an office, without admitting them to the church council.

*There are no Biblical arguments against opening the office of deacons to women. However, in this option the gifts of women in teaching and leading are*

*not engaged. It fails to do justice to the gifts of women and to current practice.*

**c. Leave the offices unchanged, open the office of minister to women.**

The Bible leaves room for women to prophesy. However, in this option they would not be allowed to be overseers.

*This option does justice to those women who have the gift of preaching, and leaves the present structure of the offices intact. Disadvantage: the expertise of a female minister would be excluded from the church council, and it implies that further reflection on our practice is required.*

**d. Leave the offices unchanged, but provide room for married couples to become office-bearers together.**

This option provides a great deal of room for the deployment of the gifts of women, and reflects the 'together' of the Bible.

*This option is quite appealing; however, in practice it would often lead to shared responsibility while at the same time only one of the two partners could act in a representative role. An unwarranted distinction is made between married and unmarried women, so that women would only be admitted to the office if their spouse also has gifts suitable for an office.*

**e. Leave the offices unchanged, but open offices with a special task to women.**

The recognition of the gifts of women is here embodied in the creation of special tasks or functions.

*In practice, this option would scarcely be different from opening all offices to women; in fact, it could serve as an intermediate step. Justice is done to the external confirmation of an inner calling. On the other hand, this would put us out of step with all of our sister churches.*

**f. Leave the offices unchanged, open them to women also, but with an emphasis on a small core church council that exercises spiritual leadership.**

This option creates room for the use of the gifts of women, while delineating a decisive difference in responsibility between men and women. It appears to offer an avenue to bring diverging convictions together.

*This option creates a structure of the office in which preaching and instruction is not longer linked to the concept of 'spiritual leadership'. It therefore fails to recognize the leadership that these spiritual gifts provide.*

**g. Review the structure of the offices, and give women an office of their own.**

Gifted women are able to carry out their offices in a gender-specific manner.

*This option leads to similar objections as does option e. and does not align well with our present culture.*

**h. Open all the offices to women (to be left in the freedom of local churches).**

*This option does the greatest justice to the deployment of the gifts the Spirit has given to women, to the shared calling and responsibility of men and women, and to current practice. However, much consideration must be given to sensitivities within local congregations and among sister churches at home and abroad. The honouring of the authority of Scripture is a very significant sore point for those who have objections to this position. Ample room must be left for local congregations to determine for themselves their own course and tempo.*

For the sake of peace in the churches, we believe that Synod must now come to a decision. We lay before Synod a number of draft decisions. Our recommendation is that all of the offices be opened to women. Such a break with the past may also cause pain for our sister churches and in our own congregations, and might lead to a parting of ways. That, however, is not our intention; rather, we envisage the building up of the churches and a shared seeking for the will of God.

That is why we wish to leave it in the freedom of the churches, while reading, praying and reflecting, to come to their own choices in introducing this option, under the guidance of the Deputies *Male/Female in the Church*.

In conjunction with this proposal, we wish to lay before Synod that the options incorporating a special office for women are worthy of consideration, even though we think that such an approach will only be temporary. It will assist the churches in learning to see the distinctiveness of men and women, and as such may well serve as a transitional option.

## APPENDIX D

### **Response to chapter 2, “Bijbelse bouwstenen” of the *Rapport deputaten M/V en ambt* by the Canadian Reformed Sub-Committee for Contact with the with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands January 2017**

The mission of the MV report is to give a biblical answer to the question whether it is justified that women in the church (and in the special office) have a different position than in the society in which we live (4). In other words, does Scripture justify the ordination of women into the offices of the church? However, already in the manner in which the report articulates its mission one detects the pressures of society’s culture on this issue. This pressure is also evident in the report.

#### **The Place of Culture**

This report attaches great significance to culture, both in biblical times and now. Those who wrote the report are convinced that their recommendations to open the offices to women are based on Scripture and emphatically deny that they are due to the demands of our current culture (61–62). Without questioning the integrity of the deputies, this denial nevertheless has some credibility issues. It is, for example, remarkable that the report states that the authority of the husband over his wife is determined by the culture of that time (13, 15) and is thus in essence not normative for today. It is also striking that among the grounds given for urging the churches to create room for women to show their gifts in proclamation and education, the pastorate, and diaconate, is the matter of our current culture. Since both men and women are now educated and have equal access to positions in society, the same should be the case in the church (67–68). This is not the first time that such a rationale is mentioned in our Dutch sister churches. Myriam Klinker-de Klerck in her 2011 study, (*Als vrouwen het woord doen*, 134), voiced similar sentiments.

The impact that secular culture is having on the churches is openly acknowledged. The report mentions that churches are making their own decisions about women in office without thorough Bible Study. The report acknowledges that this is undesirable but also admits that the growing practice of women participating in all sorts of church functions means that decisions about the role of women are already being made by the churches. The line of division between what women do for the church and the work of the special offices is being blurred (6).

#### **The Approach of the Report**

The report works its way through what it calls biblical building blocks. The idea is first to see the broad lines in Scripture about the place of men and women; next, to focus on some passages where women are speaking and where they are told to be silent; and finally to consider some passages that speak of man as head (8).

This report discerns what it calls four layers of meaning. The first layer is creation (as it was in the beginning). The second layer is a reality broken by sin. The third layer is the liberating restoration and the fourth layer is fundamental renewal. According to the report, in

layer three the work of God's grace is evident. He has, for example, an eye for women who are marginalized in a male culture, but the restoration of the true place of women goes very slowly. The fruits of God's grace in this respect can also be seen in current Western culture (really?). The fourth layer shows the completely renewed relationship of God's children towards each other. The report states that this layer is not always evident in Scripture but it must lead to an ethic of equality and no more hierarchy. All are equal and all must be able to participate fully in the life of the church. These layers of meaning cannot always be reconciled with each other. For example, the report notes that the passages that tell wives to be subject to their husbands reflect the third layer, but the closer a husband and wife move to the fourth layer of fundamental renewal the less need there will be for the wife to be subject to her husband (11–13). More about that issue later in this evaluation of the Dutch report.

When the report distinguishes these different layers of meaning, it provides justification for its claim that when the Bible speaks of the place of women, then you notice the negative influence of the surrounding culture. According to the report, it is therefore understandable that in the New Testament we have a double line: the line of grace, of male and female being one in Christ and the line that is determined by the surrounding culture, namely that a woman has no authority over a man. These lines do not quite meet. In order to do justice to the matter of women and ecclesiastical office, one must distinguish these different layers (15).

Consequently, with this view of layers, the report can easily dismiss the plain reading of the biblical text as culturally determined and try to discern what the line of grace of being all one in Christ would actually mean for the issue at hand. That is exactly what happens and the consequences are devastating for a traditional understanding of what Scripture communicates. For example, when it comes to the critical texts for whether women should be ordained or not, the report uses the cultural context of a biblical text (e.g., 1 Tim 2:11-14) to interpret Scripture in such a way that the Bible ends up meaning the opposite of what the text plainly says.

The report's use of culture in understanding and applying Scripture is therefore a central feature as well as its Achilles' heel, its vulnerable weakness. By interpreting Scripture through the lens of the culture of biblical times, as the deputies understand it, the report essentially says that unless you are familiar with the culture of those days, you cannot correctly understand or apply the biblical text to today. When you place such a high premium on understanding the culture of the times, you are basically saying that only in our supposedly enlightened times with all the available resources of archaeology, cultural, and historical studies that we can finally find out what the Lord our God is actually teaching us in the apostle's writings.

It is of course true that the latest discoveries can help us to better understand Scripture. But, God's Word is clear with respect to the intended basic meaning, not just to our generation but to all those who have preceded us as well. No reader of God's Word should be held hostage to the latest cultural studies in order to finally find out what God really meant to tell us about female ordination to ecclesiastical office. Yet this is basically what this report says and it admits that their recommendations mean a break with the past (62). Is such a break with the traditional understanding of the biblical text which has served the church since Pentecost warranted?

We need to consider the evidence. For the purpose of our evaluation, it is not necessary to go through all the different layers and arguments that the report presents. One could write a book in response to this report. Our approach is more modest. We will consider how the report has handled two critical passages: 1 Corinthians 14:33–35 and 1 Timothy 2:11–14. After that we will briefly consider the report's use of the appearance of prophetesses in Scripture. Next

we will look at how it dealt with the authority of the husband and the role of Priscilla.

### **1 Corinthians 14:33b–35**

The report begins by stating that we do not know for sure what this passage means because we do not have enough information about the situation to which the apostle is reacting. A number of exegetical points are covered. The report correctly mentions that the command to keep silent in the churches is meant for all the congregations and not just the one in Corinth. The report then notes that the demand for silence only applies to a specific situation since women were permitted to pray and prophesy in church (1 Cor 11:5; 14:26). The report goes no further on this passage and repeats that what the words mean for our time is unclear (19–20). However, this passage should not in this manner be shunted aside and made of little consequence in this discussion. More can be said that is relevant for the topic at hand.

In 1 Corinthians 14, the apostle Paul deals with prophecy and speaking in tongues with a view to ensuring that all things be done for building up. Thus to prophesy is better than speaking in tongues unless the prophecy is interpreted for the benefit of those who hear it. Prophecies however need to be carefully weighed (v. 29) for there was the danger of false prophets (cf. 1 John 4:1). In that general context the apostle says that women should be silent because they “should be in submission, as the law also says” (1 Cor 14:34). “The law” probably refers to the Old Testament, with the creation account being specifically in view since the apostle had appealed to creation earlier in regard to the relationship of men and women (1 Cor 11:8–9). The point is that when prophecies are being judged, women are not to speak for that could involve having authority over a male prophet. The demand for silence is repeated three times (1 Cor 14:34–35) underlining the importance of this prohibition.

With respect to 1 Corinthians 11, it should be noted that the practice of women praying and prophesying (1 Cor 11:5, 13) does not constitute a warrant for their having an official ecclesiastical office. The passage does not specifically state where this praying and prophesying was done. Some scholars have argued that the praying and prophesying of women in 1 Corinthians 11 took place outside the official worship services (cf. Acts 21:9–11). There is then no contradiction with the demand for silence in church in 1 Corinthians 14:33–35. However, this interpretation is not completely convincing since nothing in 1 Corinthians 11 gives the impression that this prophesying was a private activity and prophecies were to be evaluated in church (1 Cor 14:23–29). Regardless whether one interprets this activity as inside or outside the church, more to the point is the fact that the gifts of prophesying and tongues were temporary gifts of the Spirit in the apostolic era of the church. Prophets were part of the foundation of the church along with the apostles (Eph 2:20). Since a foundation is only established once, there are no more inspired prophets or prophetesses today. Such prophesying and speaking in tongues as well as the manner in which they took place are therefore not normative for the church today. The cessation of the gifts of prophecy and tongues means that 1 Corinthians 11 has no direct bearing on the issue of whether women should be admitted to ecclesiastical office.<sup>5</sup>

One of the most important and clear passages in dealing with the issue of whether female ordination is biblically warranted is 1 Timothy 2:11–14.

---

<sup>5</sup>For more detail on the gifts of prophecy and tongues and their cessation, see Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost: Studies in New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979) 55–116..

### 1 Timothy 2:11–14

The report correctly notes that in this chapter the apostle Paul appeals to both men and women to behave properly in church, each in their own way, with an appeal to creation. The report then states that the words: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man” do not constitute a general pronouncement (19). In other words, it is not normative for all times and places. This is so, according to the report, because Paul told Timothy that he had to see “older women as mothers” who had authority over their daughters and sons (1 Tim 5:2). This reasoning however does not hold. Within a domestic setting, mothers indeed have authority over their sons but in 1 Timothy 2:8–15 the context of the prohibition to teach and have authority over a man is public worship.

In trying to make its case for women in ecclesiastical office, the report asks whether women had to be silent because they lacked knowledge. As reason for raising this point, the report notes it was not usual in the culture of that time for women to be educated, yet in 1 Timothy 2:11 the apostle says: “let a woman learn quietly and in all submission.” So it appears that women were to be silent because they needed further instruction. That would also explain why the apostle did make use of gifted women such as Priscilla. The essence of the matter, according to the report, is that everyone is permitted to prophesy and to speak, but knowledge and insight is needed and without education it is not wise to speak. Furthermore, it is incumbent on men and women to behave appropriately when speaking. What is appropriate is culturally determined and what was culturally fitting in the apostle’s day does not have to be culturally fitting in our day. Thus the passages telling women to be silent (1 Cor 14:34 and 1 Tim 2:9–10) form no basis for keeping the ecclesiastical offices closed to women. Rather, according to this report, these passages “contain a call to let oneself be educated in all modesty—something that pertains to both men and women—although that means something different for each of them as also determined by the culture of the time” (20).

The report basically argues that these critical passages do not speak of barring women from ecclesiastical office, but rather these verses tell women to get educated so that they can teach and exercise authority over a man. A difficulty with this analysis is that nowhere does the apostle say this. There is no reference to the fact that they lack education as the reason for their not being able to teach or have authority over men. Rather the reason given is that God created Adam first and then Eve. In other words, the prohibition is not based on their lack of education but the text clearly justifies it by the order in which God created male and female. The text explicitly gives this as the reason. The passage reads: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. *For* Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:12–14, our emphasis). In other words, the reason for a woman to keep silent is based on creation, just as in 1 Corinthians 14:34.

In sum, there is no biblical basis in the passages just discussed for the report’s conclusion that women may be ordained to ecclesiastical office. The report’s imagined cultural rationale for silence that women needed more education before being allowed to speak has no warrant in Scripture. Indeed, the report makes the text say the opposite from what it actually states.

### Prophetesses

A big weakness of this report is that there is no systematic examination of what exactly characterized a prophetess in the Old and New Testament, but the report nevertheless uses the simple fact that women were prophetesses to argue for opening up the ecclesiastical offices to

women. But it does so in an indirect way without ever fully discussing the passages that supposedly support their conclusion.

The report acknowledges that Deborah, a prophetess who was judging Israel at a time of Canaanite oppression (Judges 4) was an exceptional case (15–16). Similarly, the report considers Mary's prophetic activity in her song (Luke 2:46–55) and Philip's unmarried daughters who prophesied, as not really connected with the prophetesses mentioned elsewhere as functioning in the congregation. These prophetesses are mentioned in Acts 2:18 and 1 Corinthians 11:5 but the report does not discuss them (14). It does assert that there was always room for women to be prophetesses and that no objections were brought against such activity (15). The report's initial conclusion on prophetesses acknowledges that there is no consensus among exegetes about the official character of the work that these prophetesses did (24).

But then the report then goes on to say that on the other hand the Bible shows that there was no problem for women to be prophetesses. Apparently they were called to the prophetic office. Their authority in prophesying is mostly accepted without any problem. In any case, they appear as those officially called (“ambtelijk geroepen”). In the New Testament, prophesying in a broader sense is linked with the way women function (“optreden”) in the congregation. God has given women talents in order to bring the congregation further on the way to the New Jerusalem (24–25).

The report suggests or gives the impression with the foregoing that the prophetic ministry of women in the New Testament (which the report never defines) therefore argues for the use of their talents in official ecclesiastical ministry today (also cf. p. 59). Furthermore, the report states that what the New Testament refers to as prophecy and prophesying is basically Spirit-guided explaining Scripture which is analogous to preaching today. Thus if women were prophetesses in the past, they can be ministers preaching the gospel today (69).

A major problem with all of this is that the report does not address the nature and circumstances of the prophetesses in the Old Testament and also does not deal with the question whether in the New Testament the prophesying and the related speaking in tongues were a temporary manifestation of special gifts of the Spirit or whether they were permanent. This type of reasoning by suggestion without clear argumentation is not helpful and does not justify the conclusions which are drawn from these passages.

The report also confused the issue by linking the prophetess with the three-fold office of a Christian and then asking whether there is any difference between the office of all believers and the special ecclesiastical office (28). This blurring of the boundary between the special ecclesiastical offices and the general office of believers is unwarranted.

### **Authority of the Husband**

On this issue, the report also shows the consequence of postulating several layers in the biblical text: especially the layer influenced by the grace of God and the layer of fundamental renewal. For someone who accepts Scripture at face value the report thus draws puzzling conclusions which seem more due to a desire to make the text say what the committee wants rather than listening to what the text actually communicates. In 1 Peter 3, Scripture says “wives, be subject to your own husbands” (v. 1) and describes as exemplary Sarah's obedience to Abraham whom she called Lord (v.6). The apostle concludes this discussion by telling husbands: “live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessels, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered” (v. 7). The report concludes from the above that the more husband and wife do

according to this instruction, the less reason there will be for the wife to acknowledge her husband's authority and to call him her lord (9, 13).

But according to Scripture the one does not follow from the other. Because the report interprets the command for the wife to be subject to her husband as belonging to the biblical layer where God's grace has not led to fundamental renewal, the report seems to consider the husband's authority over his wife as something negative. But the report's analysis and conclusion contradicts other biblical passages. "Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord" (Eph 5:22; see also Titus 2:5). This submission does not deny the equality of man and woman as both being made in the image of God. But each has their complementary God-ordained role and place.

Surprisingly, the report draws inappropriately on 1 Corinthians 7:4b ("the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does") to suggest that the woman is not under the authority of her husband (13). However, this advice within the context of marital intimacy takes nothing away from the position of the husband as the head of the marriage relationship.

Also Ephesians 5:21 cannot justify the committee's agenda (13). In that chapter the apostle Paul urges his audience not to get drunk, to address one another in psalms and hymns, to give thanks to God and to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. The phrase "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ" cannot be used, as the report seems to suggest, to abandon the leadership position of the husband. This phrase is explained by what follows, which includes the words: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (Eph 5:22; also see Col 3:18).

The report concludes that the prevailing cultural view in New Testament times of the man as the authority figure in a marriage is so strong that this view also forms the point of departure in the public meetings of the congregation (13). In other words, the husband being the head of the marriage is not a divine ordinance but only a cultural practice of those times which spills over into meetings of the congregation.

### **Priscilla and Aquila**

Priscilla and Aquila both taught Apollos "the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). The report rightly concludes that the apostle Paul was grateful for the work that Priscilla did, but at the same time he instructed the congregations in which they worked that women were to be silent in church (17–18). One would think that the conclusion of the report would therefore ultimately be that Priscilla's work was private instruction and not official ecclesiastical work. However, as noted earlier, the report judges the instruction for women to be silent to apply only to women who were not educated. Since Priscilla was educated, the command for women to be silent would not have applied to her (20, 24, 25). Thus the example of Priscilla is used to buttress the argument that the apostolic command for women to be silent only applies to those who need further instruction. That was however not the argument that Paul used. He went back to creation (1 Tim 2:12–14). The reason Paul could make grateful use of Priscilla as well as Aquila is because they taught him privately, taking him aside (1 Cor 18:26). She did not teach in an official ecclesiastical capacity.

### **A Major Omission**

Surprisingly the report has no discussion of the biblical qualifications for the office of elder which assume that males are in view (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6). Judging from the direction of

the report as a whole, if it had dealt with the criteria for becoming an elder, it would probably have said that those were the relevant qualifications for the culture of that time but they no longer apply to today since men and women have equal education and employment opportunities in our current society. Such an approach makes the biblical text mean something different from what the text states and denies the clarity and authority of Scripture. This method of interpretation leads to the church absorbing worldly thinking and cultural values and thus losing its distinctiveness as the holy body of Christ.

### **Conclusion of the Biblical Section of the Report**

The report unfortunately does not let Scripture speak on its own terms but imposes on Scripture a system whereby some passages are said to reflect the culture of the day while other passages show more the grace of God for the renewal of life in Christ. In the process, the creation ordinance of God as appealed to by the apostle Paul is pushed aside and considered irrelevant. Such an approach takes away from Scripture and imposes a meaning on the text and in some cases makes Scripture say the opposite from what the text itself states.

Sub-Committee for Contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

J. de Gelder

J. Moesker

G. J. Nordeman

C. Van Dam

January, 2017

## APPENDIX E

### **Visit to Synod Meppel 2017 of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in The Netherlands**

If you read the Acts of the last number of synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), you'll notice that there has been a growing concern in the CanRC about the direction the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN) have been taking since around the year 2000. This eventually led to Synod Burlington 2010 appointing a sub-committee for the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA), called the Sub-committee Relations Churches in the Netherlands (SRCN). This sub-committee has reported to the last two synods of the CanRC with growing concern about the developments in the RCN. The main concern has been how the Bible is being interpreted in the RCN. This concern has become focussed on the place of women in the RCN. The past three synods in RCN have received reports of their Deputies Male/Female in the church which have shown a Bible interpretation which has tried to show that the Bible is not as clear about excluding women from church offices as has historically been accepted in Reformed churches world-wide. The Deputies M/F released another such report at the end of October 2016 for their upcoming Synod Meppel in 2017. The SRCN met a number of times in 2016 and 2017 to review our mandate and to prepare for the report of the RCN M/F. The deputies were late with their report, so the SRCN was unable to go into the full report in detail. However, a response to the biblical section of the report was prepared, which we believe was the most important part. This response was sent to the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the RCN (BBK) and they forwarded it to Synod Meppel to be included in their considerations concerning the report at Synod.

#### ***Foreign Delegates Week at Synod Meppel 2017***

All four members of the SRCN attended the "Foreign Delegates Week" at Synod Meppel 2017 from April 3 to 8, a week organized by the RCN synods to receive and regale delegates from their numerous foreign sister churches throughout the world. We were warmly welcomed on April 3<sup>rd</sup> at a beautiful meeting facility (Mennorode) in the forests of the Veluwe near Elspeet. As usual for the RCN synods, the eating and sleeping and meeting arrangements were superb. Over time there were approximately thirty-five foreign delegates from various continents. On Tuesday, April 4, the foreign delegates were taken to downtown Amsterdam and given a tour of evangelistic efforts among drug addicts and prostitutes there. The following day we were transported to Kampen to view some of the city and to listen to some presentations by lecturers at the Theological University Kampen about "Reformed Witness in a Multi-Religious Word." That evening we met with the delegates of the Reformed Church in the United States, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) to discuss common concerns and our approach to the report of the Deputies M/F entitled "Serving Together." Members of the SRCN also engaged in private discussions with other foreign as well as Dutch delegates. Almost all foreign delegates expressed concern about the report. On Thursday April 6, after breakfast, the Dutch synod delegates and the foreign delegates gathered together in the main hall of the Mennorode facility, and after devotions and introductions, three foreign delegates were invited to make presentations – Rev. R. D.

Anderson of the FRCA, Prof. Dr. H. M. Yoo of the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea, Rev. D. K. Kithongo of the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church. They spoke about their churches and also of the views of their churches concerning women in office. All three, while acknowledging the significant role of women in the church, urged the RCN not to adopt the report and open the offices for women. These presentations were followed by a defense of the report “Serving Together” by one of the Deputies M/F, Dr. Erik de Boer.

Organizers at Synod had prearranged four groups each composed of some synod delegates, Deputies Men/Women, and foreign delegates. These four groups met for an exchange of thoughts following lunch. The meetings were respectful and along with the other delegates of sister churches we had opportunity to critique the report “Serving Together” and to listen to the defense of the report. A few of the concerns raised in the meetings we attended were:

1. The report has come with a new interpretation of passages such as 1 Timothy 2 which historically have always been plainly read as forbidding women to have authority of office and to preach. The reply was that these passages were interpreted from the point of view of a male-oriented culture, and in our more egalitarian age eyes have been opened to other ways of interpreting those passages.
2. Who determines what the culture was at the time the New Testament letters in particular were written? The response was that this is a matter of ongoing research.
3. The report was selective in the passages it interpreted, for instance not dealing with some Scripture passages which obviously deal with the matter of offices. For instance, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 outline the qualifications for office and both speak of the need for elders and deacons to be the husband of one wife. There was no substantive reply to this.
4. The four layers of meaning which the deputies applied to the Bible in their report is a self-made system which they have imposed on Scripture and various passages in the Bible can arbitrarily be assigned to one or other layer, depending on how one wishes to see such passages. The response was that the Bible lends itself to such a system of four layers and the (cultural) context determines which layer is suitable for each passage.
5. Could the same contextual approach to Scripture when applied to other contemporary ethical matters (e.g. homosexual relations) not end up emptying the Bible of its normative quality? The reply was that each ethical issue needs to be examined in the light of Scripture on its own.

Many of the foreign delegates had questions, but it became apparent over time that the deputies and most of the synod delegates had made up their minds that Scripture does not forbid women in office, even if it does not recommend women to serve in the church offices. Unfortunately, these meetings were held behind closed doors and we were not given opportunity to address Synod in session as a whole about our concerns. This means that the concerns expressed in those meetings remained “off the record.”

That afternoon we were bussed to the Meppel RCN (“Kruiskerk”) and treated to supper by the congregation. Afterwards there was a worship service in which the Lord’s Supper was also celebrated. We had discussed the matter of attending the sacrament with some of the other foreign delegates, and decided that we would take part. We are still officially sister churches and the Lord’s Supper should not be used as a form of protest. After the service, there was opportunity for fellowship.

On Friday April 7, we were invited to the main Mennorode hall to observe a plenary session of Synod 2017. After the welcome and opening Synod discussed the “Report Deputies BBK: Relations Churches Abroad” to Synod. This report only mentioned that there had been contacts with the CanRC and that “discussions and correspondence have not been successful in preventing a critical report from being submitted to the General Synod of Dunnville in May 2016.” The recommendations of the main report were adopted, including the decision to continue the relationship with the CanRC.

After the synod sessions, there was once again opportunity for networking and for discussions with delegates and deputies of the RCN Synod. Another closed meeting with a number of synod delegates was held, but it became apparent that our concerns and the concerns of the other foreign delegates were not having any serious impact. The momentum propelled by the prevailing culture and the practices common in many churches appeared to be too great, and we sensed no real groundswell of disagreement with the report of deputies M/W “Serving Together” and how it handled and interpreted Scripture.

On the morning of Saturday, April 8, the RCN welcomed the Christian Reformed Churches of the Philippines to sister church relationship and the delegate of that church gave a presentation about those churches. A hearty farewell was organized after that, and the “Foreign Delegates Week” was closed with singing and prayer. We were impressed by the organization and care we received throughout the week. However, we found that what we heard in our discussions with the RCN deputies and delegates with regard to the report “Serving Together” quite unsettling. The questions and criticisms of many of the foreign delegates concerning how the Bible was being interpreted were politely received but basically brushed aside. We were heartened, though, by the fact that many of the other foreign delegates from various parts of the world shared most of our concerns and criticisms. And we were thankful that we could network with so many of the foreign delegates there.

After we had returned to Canada, we received an extensive questionnaire from the advisory committee of Synod Meppel regarding the report “Serving Together” and we were invited to observe the synod session June 16 concerning our response to the biblical section of the report “Serving Together.” We declined to attend the synod session as our report criticizing the biblical basis of the report speaks for itself. And we did not reply to the extensive questionnaire. The accompanying letter stated, “Although we discussed with you in two groups for almost two hours, we all felt that a great deal had not yet been said. We also had the impression that in the various rounds of discussion there was almost no attempt to seek common ground between our opinions and arguments.” We believe that we said what we wanted to say (also in our “Response to the Biblical Grounds”), and we were not interested in “seeking common ground” as far as the interpretation of Scripture was concerned since this would mean compromising the clear words of Scripture against female ordination.

### ***Final decisions of Synod Meppel 2017 regarding females in office***

The words of concern spoken by the CanRC deputies at Synod Zwolle 2008, the disquiet expressed in our meetings with the BBK before and at Synod Harderwijk 2011, the letter of admonition sent by Synod Carman 2013, the extensive critique of the report Deputies M/F submitted to Synod Ede 2014, our words at that assembly, our critique of the biblical evidence

sent to Synod Meppel 2017, and our discussions with members of the Deputies M/F and of the synodical advisory committee of Synod Meppel apparently all fell on deaf ears. With their handling of the Bible in this as well as other matters, the RCN are charting a course that is different from that of almost all its Reformed/Presbyterian sister churches.

We were amazed at the pressure the deputies and delegates at synods felt they were under in order to produce some kind of biblical basis to justify opening the church offices to females. One of the delegates stated on the floor of Synod Ede 2014 during the debate on the report to that body that women can, must, and shall serve in office and that all that was needed was to find the biblical basis for that. Synod Ede did not find that the Deputies M/F had accomplished that in their report, but instead of putting aside the matter, appointed Deputies M/F to investigate “how the offices can be structured so that women can be active for God’s kingdom within that structure” (Decision concerning M/F in the Church, 3.a.1). This shows how there has been increasing pressure from within the RCN, influenced by the prevailing feminist culture, to open the offices for females and that the deputies had the task to come up with a biblical justification for that. The decisions of Synod Meppel show evidence of that kind of pressure. In the July 4, 2017 letter which Synod Meppel sent to all the churches outlining the background of its decisions concerning females and the offices, this body describes (p. 2) why this is a currently relevant issue: *A practice has grown of increasing deployment of our sisters and their gifts in all kinds of tasks in the congregations. Sisters perform pastoral, leadership and instructional tasks that in the past had only been carried out by office-bearers. This sets up a tension between our doctrine of the office and congregational practice.*

Under pressure to come to a conclusion on the topic of females in office, Synod Meppel provided its own grounds for its decisions. Little of the actual reasoning of the report “Serving Together” comes to the fore in those grounds. The many clear and plain passages speaking about the gender-specific roles of men and women in the church were simply put aside as culturally determined and unclear and thus not normative for the church in this day and age. Instead scattered passages about women prophesying or using gifts in special circumstances in the church were sewn together as proof that the Bible does not forbid women to serve in church offices. Synod Meppel declared in its decision in June 2017 “that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of mercy and therefore to the office of deacon” (Decision 4), and “that there are Scriptural grounds, that next to men, also to call women to the ministry of oversight, pastorate and instruction, and therefore to the office of elder” (Decision 5), and finally, “that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of preaching and instruction, and therefore to the office of ministry” (Decision 6).

We do not see those grounds as solid basis for opening the church offices for females at all. Decision 5 concerning the office of elder, for instance, had as grounds the Old Testament references to Miriam (Micah 6:4) and Deborah (Judges 4-5), and New Testament references to older women being called to be examples and to spiritual care (Titus 2:3-5) and to Paul’s words about Junia and Andronicus as apostles and about other couples as his co-workers. Dr. C. Van Dam has demonstrated in his article in the July 28 issue of *Clarion* (Vol 66, No 15, pp.423-426) that these references constitute a very weak basis for Synod’s decision justifying the ordination of female elders in the church. He concludes in this article (*Clarion*, p. 426), Synod ended up grasping at straws as any neutral reader of Scripture can see from the evidence.

Furthermore, Synod's apparent refusal to let the full weight of the clear apostolic teaching on the requirements for male eldership in the church (1 Tim 3 and Titus 1) come to bear on their decision making process is unreasonable. Synod ended up recommending women for ordination to the office of elder contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture.

There was a proposal to delay the implementation of the decision to allow females to be ordained to all the offices until the next synod, but this proposal was defeated and so the decision is effective immediately. The defeat of this proposal in fact cuts off the real possibility of appeal. As well, Synod Meppel also decided to again appoint Deputies M/F. Their task now is to "inform and advise" local churches and classes about the synod decision concerning women and office. If the decision was so clearly based on the non-clarity of the Bible passages about females and office, one wonders about the need for these deputies.

### ***Later decisions Synod Meppel 2017 regarding church unity***

The decision to allow females to be ordained to the offices in the church has removed a major obstacle in the movement toward unity of the RCN with the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC). They are a loose federation of eighty-seven churches with 33,000 members. These churches separated from the RCN in the late 1960s due to a number of issues including strict subscription to the Three Forms of Unity. The NRC are not as exactly bound to those confessions. They have also permitted the ordination of females to all church offices. They have acknowledged the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CRCN) as well as the RCN as churches of Jesus Christ and there are quite a few local churches of all three federations which worship together in one form or another. The NRC have been engaged in (re)unity talks with the RCN over the last twenty years or so, and we as SCRNL have noted a movement of the RCN in the direction of the NRC, particularly with respect to the matters of being more broad-minded in the binding to the confessions and in interpretation of the Bible. Neither of those matters are apparently now hindrances to federative unity, as Synod Meppel has decided to move toward full unity with the NRC and to accept the invitation of the National Assembly of the NRC to meet in Kampen on November 11, 2017 to discuss the process to follow to achieve that unity. It is wonderful when churches find one another and are able to come to full unity. However, such a unity ought to be grounded on the Bible as confessed in the standards and we do not see how a unity based on new biblical hermeneutics and looser binding to the Three Forms of Unity (!) is the unity so praised in the Bible (Ps 133, Eph 4:5-6).

### ***The July 2017 meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches***

The ninth meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) was convened in Jordan, Ontario from July 12 – 19, 2017. This meeting would be a kind of test for the decision of Synod Meppel to allow females to church offices. This matter took up much time in the meetings as there was much discussion and various options were entertained. Some delegates spoke of the fact that the RCN was one of the founding members of the ICRC in 1985 and have been a great help and encouragement to member churches in the past. Yet it was quite clear that the view of the RCN is not the view of any of the other churches in the ICRC, and certainly was not the view of any of those, apart from the RCN, who spoke at our meeting. It was judged that they had transgressed Article IV: 4 of the Constitution in their recent synodical decision to permit the ordination of persons to the offices of minister and ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture. It was with much heaviness of heart, then, that the

Conference decided to suspend the membership of the RCN in the ICRC. If there is no change with regard to the decision of Synod Meppel, the RCN will be expelled from the ICRC at its next meeting in four years. It is hoped that the criticism of that decision at this body as well as the suspension will cause the RCN to reflect on the direction it has taken with regards to Bible interpretation.

*Some concluding comments*

There is an apparent pattern of actions once churches proceed to interpret the Bible in ways that accommodate to the prevailing western culture. Those churches will in due time also want to be more inclusive and seek ways to accommodate homosexual relations. The Bible, however, clearly shows that a homosexual lifestyle is sinful (Lev 18:22 and 20:13, Rom 1:24-27). Previous RCN synods (e.g. Zwolle 2008) dealt with issues of homosexual practice, and had stated in the past that such relations were unacceptable in the light of Scripture. Synod Meppel was confronted with a question from one of the churches about homosexual practice and there is reason to believe that there will be increasing pressure to interpret the Bible in such a way that same-sex relations are acceptable in the church. The NRC have accepted this and the growing unity between those churches and the RCN makes this a very real possibility. Synod Carman 2013 sent a letter of admonition to Synod Ede 2014 of the RCN which stated, Should you stay on your present course in regard to the matters we have raised in this letter, we fear that the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship which we have with you will be jeopardized. We urge your Synod and your churches to stand firm in confessing the whole truth of the Word of God and to defend this truth boldly and vigorously, even when it is denounced and hated by the world.

Unfortunately, this admonition has been ignored and the RCN have continued on the course that has caused so much concern in the CanRC. Synod Dunnville decided to suspend parts of the ecclesiastical fellowship. At this point it appears that this also has not had any effect in the RCN. A decision to terminate church relations between the CanRC and RCN seems inevitable at this time. Many of us were or are descended from emigrants from those churches, and so we share a common heritage with the RCN. A termination of relations between churches at the next synod of the CanRC would be very painful, particularly when it concerns churches in which we find our roots and with which we enjoyed almost seventy years of close fellowship. Please keep these churches in your prayers. And may the rapid pace of accommodation to modern culture and theological change in the RCN cause the CanRC to heed the serious exhortation of Proverbs 23:23a, “Buy truth and do not sell it.”

Rev. J. DeGelder

Rev. J. Moesker

G. J. Nordeman

Dr. C. Van Dam

## APPENDIX F

### Canadian Reformed Address to Synod Meppel (April 2017)

Dear members of Synod Meppel,

On behalf the Canadian Reformed Churches, we bring you greetings in the name of our risen Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. We rejoice that we together with you may confess our common faith in Christ who died but rose from the dead and who hastens to return to make all things new. We are thankful for our longstanding relationship as sister churches and for the Reformed confessional heritage which we by God's grace may share. May our common commitment to the faith entrusted to us (Jude 3) help us to face the many challenges that face Christ's church in the twenty-first century – challenges, both here and in Canada, such as, for example, the pressures of egalitarianism, individualism, evangelicalism, and secularism.

The Lord our God has blessed us as a federation in the last three years since we met at Synod Ede. We rejoice in the unity of the faith which we may have as churches and are very grateful for the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) in Hamilton. Most appropriately this seminary organized this year's seventh annual conference held in January on the theme "Rich and Relevant: Why the Reformation Still Matters after 500 Years." An international team of speakers gave us insight into the ongoing relevance of the Reformation for issues such as the clarity and certainty of Scripture, worship, liturgics, and missions, just to mention these. The conference was a great encouragement to reaffirm and maintain the riches which by God's grace were rediscovered half a millennium ago. The seminary, in cooperation with the Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College (CCRTC), is also involved in commemorating the Reformation by means of a special program called "Faithful to His Word: Celebrate 1517 in 2017." The strategy of this special initiative is to create opportunities in the arts that lead to a renewed and deeper appreciation of the Reformation. With that purpose in mind, this program has commissioned music and drama and welcomes essays, poetry, songs, and visual arts of which a selection will be published in a commemorative coffee table book.

The Canadian Reformed Churches continue to support the seminary and reap the benefits. We are thankful to the Lord for the faculty and staff and for the students who come to study and that this training for the ministry can fruitfully labour in peace and harmony. Over the last three years, graduates have accepted calls to proclaim the good news in Canada, Australia, and South Africa. The Canadian Reformed Churches are also active in spreading the gospel in mission endeavours both in urban centres at home (Hamilton, Vancouver, and Prince George) as well as abroad in Asia, Brazil, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea. Mexico is also being considered as a mission field. Along with the work of mission is the need to provide for the real material needs that missionaries encounter. This assistance takes many different forms. Also functioning in diaconal work is the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund.

To facilitate the work of mission and to make the use of resources as effective as possible, the Canadian Reformed Missions Association meets annually to discuss areas of mutual concern,

help each other with advice, and listen to stimulating presentations that can give direction for the future.

Christian education is very important to us and there are Christian schools, both elementary and secondary, across the country, some have limited government support, others do not and they are entirely funded by the church community. Our church members also support special homes for those with mental disabilities and homes for seniors as well as care facilities.

Increasingly, there is more and more engagement by those in our circles on the political and social issues in our nation. The Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) continues to expand and works diligently to provide resources, to educate church members on the current topics of the day, and to help them bring their concerns to their elected representatives. ARPA has also been active on the legal front, defending God's rights before the courts. In their short history they have even had the privilege of being able to bring their testimony to the Supreme Court of Canada three times.

A major highlight of the past three years was the General Synod which met in Dunnville, Ontario from May 10-19, 2016. A topic that generated considerable interest in Canada was the issue of whether women should be permitted to vote in the election of office bearers. This matter had been dealt with in the previous two synods. Synod Dunnville answered appeals on this issue by essentially deciding that it is up to the local church to determine whether women should be given the right to vote. Synod decided that giving women this opportunity is not in conflict with Scripture and it is a matter of local regulation.

A very special event at Synod was the official presentation of the third edition of the *Book of Praise* to the chairman of synod. This edition has all the 150 Psalms as well as 85 hymns. It is the culmination of many years of labour. The first deputies for a Genevan psalter were appointed by Synod Homewood-Carman in 1954. Through the years more and more Psalms set to Genevan tunes became available which resulted in the first complete *Book of Praise* with all 150 Psalms and 62 hymns in 1972. As churches we are very grateful to be able to have and use this treasure of biblical songs.

Synod's agenda included our ecclesiastical relations with other churches. Unfortunately, there was little progress to report on closer relations with the United Reformed Churches with whom we would like to be one. The synod decided to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship and to reappoint and expand the Committee for Church Unity. With respect to our relationship with you, our Dutch sister churches, Synod dealt with the concerns about the apparent direction you are heading fuelled by a new way of looking at Scripture. Most recently this new direction is evident in the proposal at this synod to admit women to all the offices in the church. This proposition is contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture. Also of great concern to us is the toleration of homosexual relationships and those in such relationships being admitted to the Lord's Table. We are dismayed and saddened by these developments which are contrary to the Word of God. We have detailed them in our report to Synod Dunnville.

This synod noted (in Article 104) these developments "with sad and heavy hearts" for we have had "a deep and rich common history" with you. We recognized that you are facing many

challenges in your Dutch context but “we all live in a cultural context that is hostile to God’s Word. Nevertheless, the authority of Scripture transcends culture and needs to be maintained in any cultural context.” Because the degree to which the authority of Scripture is recognized varies within your churches, synod considered it “prudent to temporarily suspend the operation of the Ecclesiastical Fellowship rules 4 and 5.” This means that our churches will no longer automatically accept attestations or certificates of good standing coming from your churches and your ministers will no longer automatically have access to our pulpits. Our consistories are urged to exercise due diligence in these areas to ensure soundness in doctrine and conduct. All this shows that our relationship as churches is strained at the moment. Synod Dunnville expressed the hope that this would be a temporary situation and we echo that hope.

You have meant so much for us in the past and been a great encouragement to us. It is therefore very painful for our churches, especially the older members, to witness a growing divergence and disconnect between you and the Canadian Reformed Churches. As representatives of these churches we implore you in love to return to your heritage of acknowledging the full authority of Scripture on the issues that are on your synodical agenda. We need each other in a Western cultural context that is in the process of rejecting whatever remains of its Christian origins. As we said at Synod Ede: “May we continue to be partners in contending “for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3) and may we continue to be a blessing to each other. May the Lord our God give this assembly everything it needs to stay true to his Word.”

Delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches

J. de Gelder

J. Moesker

G. Nordeman

C. Van Dam

## APPENDIX G



Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland

Meppel 2017

Postadres: Postbus 770  
3800 AT Amersfoort  
Bezoekadres: Conferentiecentrum  
Mennorode  
Apeldoornseweg 185  
8075 RJ Elspeet  
Telefoon: 06 31 684 729  
E-mail: [synode@gkv.nl](mailto:synode@gkv.nl)  
Internet: [www.gkv.nl](http://www.gkv.nl)

To all the church councils and all the classes  
of the Reformed Churches

Almelo, July 4, 2017  
Concerns: Decisions Male/Female and office  
Mark: 25-MVEA-170704

Dear brothers and sisters,

Synod has requested its moderamen to explain and provide information concerning its decisions in relation to *Male/Female and the Office* in the letter below.

In this letter we would like to tell you something about the background to the decisions that were taken. We also describe the decision-making process that we as General Synod have followed. Finally, we make it clear that it is for the churches to make the next move. We express the hope that we may, with the help of God, find our way together in this matter.

#### **The Background**

In 2005, at the General Synod of Amersfoort-Centrum, the matter 'Women in the Church' first found its way onto the table of Synod.

The immediate cause of this was a letter sent by the church council of the GKv of Voorthuizen-Barneveld. In it, the council raised the issue that in our contact with the Netherlands Reformed Churches the matter of 'women and office' brought with it questions that "*could not be addressed in a simple manner by Biblical answers*". Furthermore, the council pointed out that "*we are dealing with a gradually growing practice of sisters who are deploying their gifts within the congregation in the absence of a clear Biblical rationale. Upon closer study, complex exegetical and hermeneutical questions quickly come to the surface; this is a task that goes beyond our capacity to deal with. What is more, we believe that this matter transcends local significance.*"

The General Synod, upon a proposal by the Regional Synod of Gelderland, instituted Deputies for 'Women in the Church', with the following mandate:

- To investigate, by means of a problem analysis, chiefly on the basis of empirical research, and in collaboration with the Theological University, the questions and problems the churches have identified around the subject of 'women in the church';
- To develop an approach that sets out in which way we may come to sound, Scripturally founded answers to the questions and problems that this investigation brings to the fore.

That was the beginning of the process that led to the decisions we have now made, in the year 2017.



We briefly outline the intermediate steps that followed:

- In 2008 the first report of Deputies was released; it contained a great deal of basic information. On the basis of a review of literature and empirical research the deputies observed that several different lines of argument played out in this matter, and that a range of views existed within the church around it. At that time, the Deputies proposed to keep this matter on the churches' agenda, by undertaking a theoretical study, and also by engaging in a dialogue within the churches.
- The Deputies that followed (2011) published a set of guidelines, and reported on how they were used in the churches. In addition, the book *Als vrouwen het woord doen (When women speak)* by Myriam Klinkerde Klerk (2011) saw publication: this theoretical study was carried out at the request of the Deputies. New Deputies were appointed, who were to prepare a pathway providing directions for the decision-making process.
- In 2014 the majority of Deputies presented the conclusion that *"The position that besides men, women also may serve in the offices of the church, as described in this report, fits within the breadth of what can be affirmed as Biblical and Reformed"*. The discussion that ensued at Synod centred especially on culture, hermeneutics and the offices. Synod did not agree with the supporting arguments to the Deputies' conclusion, but at the same time did decide that *"the view that beside men women may also serve in the ecclesiastical offices must be open for free debate, provided that arguments are based on Scripture."* Synod appointed two new deputyships, one to conduct discussions within the churches, and the other to focus on a study of the matter.
- In 2016 the study Deputies (*Male/Female and the Office*) released a preliminary report, in which the sore points in the discussion were identified, and in which the two lines that can be seen in Scripture were explicitly explored: one line can be discerned that curtails the contribution of women, while the other line clearly acknowledges such a contribution. Do we do an injustice to Scripture if we do not give this room to women, or rather if we do? With this report, the Deputies aimed to encourage the churches to begin a spiritual process of finding a shared course in addressing this problem. This was done in collaboration with the Deputies *Male/Female in the Church*, who had made an inventory of the current role of women in the local churches, and who had guided the process in the churches through local and regional discussion evenings.
- In their final report, *"Serving Together"*, the Deputies *Male/Female and the Office* articulated their findings about: what the Bible says about women; what the Bible says about the offices; the historical development of the offices; the practice in our churches; and the insights of sister churches within our own country and abroad.

#### **Why is this a currently relevant issue?**

In its discussions, the General Synod of Meppel (2017) has been continually and especially mindful of the urgency of this matter, which had been on the table of Synods since 2005. This urgency was highlighted in 2016 by the Deputies *Male/Female in the Church*.

A practice has grown of increasing deployment of our sisters and their gifts in all kinds of tasks in the congregations. Sisters perform pastoral, leadership and instructional tasks that in the past had only been carried out by office-bearers. This sets up a tension between our doctrine of the office and congregational practice. What is the Biblical underpinning and justification of the deployment of women in the



congregation?

At the same time, the delegates to Synod were constantly confronted with the differences of view that exist concerning this matter. That is the situation in which we as churches find ourselves: we tasted it in the variety of letters that were sent to us from the churches; we encountered it in the meetings we had with sister churches throughout the world during Synod's "days for churches abroad". And in our meeting sessions at Synod we wrestled with the same differences in insight.

Inside and outside the meetings at Synod we spoke to each other about the doctrine of the office, hermeneutics, the texts requiring women to be silent, and the different roles of men and women. We considered alternative proposals: for example, we considered the possibility of opening the office of deacon to women, and at the same time to broaden our view of this office beyond our current practice; similarly, giving women permission to preach, while the office of elder (incorporating the final responsibility for the congregation) would then be reserved for men.

#### **The decisions of Synod**

First of all, Synod decided to encourage the churches to make careful arrangements with regard to the appointment of men and women in various kinds of service that do not belong to the offices. See decision 2. This decision gives expression to our appreciation for and recognition of the possibilities the Spirit has given to women, gifts that they deploy in the congregation.

Further, Synod declared that there are Scriptural grounds to call, next to men, also women to the office of deacon, elder and minister. The text of the decisions articulates that *next to* the view that (certain) offices are to be reserved for men, there is *also* room for the view that these offices may be filled by women. (See decision 3). We did not easily resign ourselves to the difference in interpretation of the relevant texts. A careful weighing of the *content* of what Scripture says preceded these decisions, and this is reflected in the grounds provided. See decisions 3, 4 and 5.

We were able, on a number of points, to come to agreement; at the same time differences of insight remained, especially in relation to the calling of women to the offices of elder or minister. These differences in insight mirror the situation that exists within the churches.

#### **The next move: up to the churches**

Next, Synod decided to leave room for the local churches to decide for themselves whether, if so in what manner, and when they want to act in line with these decisions. See decision 7.

It is now up to each of the churches to discuss the decisions of Synod, and to address what lives in their own congregations. What is the level of support in the congregation for opening the offices to sisters? Do female members of the congregation feel called to an office? How ought we to deal with this in practice from here? It is vital that reflection and discussion about this matter does not come to a halt. That is what Synod has tried to establish in decision 8.

In order to facilitate this process of reflection, discussion and decision-making, Synod decided to appoint new Deputies *Male/Female in the Church*, in order to provide support to congregations and classes, to investigate what lives in the churches following on from the decisions that have been made, and to report to the next Synod. See decision 10.



### Our Prayer

Synod is well aware that the decisions it has taken concerning the fulfilling of the offices by women will be received in different ways. For years already, differences of view have existed within the churches. This could easily hinder a genuine conversation between brothers and sisters.

That is why Synod issues an urgent plea to the churches and its members to carefully consider, with an open Bible, and before the face of God, the decisions it has taken and the grounds presented in support of them.

In the meantime, Synod is also cognizant of the fact that this approach to its decisions will not automatically lead to agreement concerning the opening of the offices to women. As a result, there will be growing differences in practice, from congregation to congregation, in relation to the filling of the offices.

Mindful of this, Synod makes an appeal to the churches and its members, even when there is difference of opinion on this point, to keep accepting one another (Romans 15:7). Let us heed the appeal of the apostle Paul to be eager to maintain the unity that the Spirit gives us in Christ in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). Let us realize that for now we see in a mirror dimly, and only know in part (1 Corinthians 13:12). And may we have strength to comprehend, together with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:18,19). Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

*"Peace be to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible". (Ephesians 6:23,24)*

in unity through Christ,  
on behalf of the Synod,

ds. Frans Wisselink,  
scriba II

Supplement: decisions of Synod MF and office



### Supplement: Decisions MFAO

#### Materials:

1. Preliminary Report of Deputies Male/ Female and Office – *The Sore Points* (08-07-2016);
2. Final Report of Deputies Male/Female and Office – *Serving Together* (01-11-2016);
3. Letter from GK Brunssum-Treebeek (23-12-2016), indicating it is pleased with the report *Serving Together*, and expressing heartfelt agreement with draft decision 4;
4. Letter from GK Sint Jansklooster-Kadoelen (13-01-2017), interacting with the report *Serving Together*: taking the starting point in the creation of man and women is good; however, only the man was created in the image of God, not the woman; the 'four layers' model is incorrect; it is desirable that women are optimally deployed in the church, but that the differences between man and woman are not glossed over;
5. Letter from GK Kantens (23-01-2017), interacting with the report *Samen Dienen*: the manner in which chapter 2 gives attention to the historical contours provides valuable insights; however, it seems that the concept of equality between man and woman figures too prominently; chapter 3 seems to aim at providing room for women within the current structures of the office; broadening the office of deacons and (later) opening the office of deacons to women would be a good option; this matter ought not to be left in the freedom of the churches;
6. Letter from GK Bussum-Huizen (24-01-2107), providing an analysis of the report *Samen Dienen*: the report arrives at a different stance concerning the position of women in the congregation than has hitherto been taught in the churches; its discussion concerning the texts requiring women to be silent is too sketchy;
7. Letter from GK Emmeloord (26-01-2017), requesting that Synod limits itself to a declaration that 'women in office' is not in conflict with the Word of God, and that it leaves till the next Synod a decision to actually open the offices to sisters.
8. Supplementary report of Deputies Male/Female in Office' (31-01-2017): supplement to chapter 5 of the report *Samen Dienen*
9. Letter from the Canadian Reformed Church (24-10-2017), interacting with chapter 2 of the report *Samen Dienen*: the manner in which the 'four layers' are described shows that 'culture' has determined the direction of the report; it is clear from I Corinthians 14:33b-35 and I Timothy 2:11-14 that the Bible leaves no grounds for the ordination of women; the report does not offer a clear description of what the Bible means with 'prophesying'; man and women have equal value, but according to Ephesians 5:22 women are to recognize the authority of their husband, and in this context the reference to I Corinthians 7:4b is inappropriate; the report falls short in failing to pay attention to I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6;
10. Letter from GK Capelle a/d IJssel-Noord (10-02-2017): asserting that the report *Samen Dienen* fails to do justice to the Word of God: in Chapter 2 the deputies wrongly state that Paul's interpretation of Genesis 1-3 is not to be regarded as normative; hence, the deputies have not done proper justice to the 'line of authority'; in Chapter 3 the difference between the ruling office and all kinds of service within the church has been watered down;
11. Letter from GK Spakenburg-Noord (24-01-2017): requesting not to go beyond decisions-in-principle at this stage, and only implementing these decisions if the next Synod agrees to do so with a great majority;
12. Letter from GK Veenendaal-Oost (27-01-2017): asserting that the line the Bible gives concerning



leadership of the congregation points to the man's role; in its view, insufficient weight has been given to the fact that at the Fall it was Adam who bore ultimate responsibility, and that Jesus appointed 12 male disciples; expressing objections against the deputies' reformulation of their mandate; and making a plea for option e., possibly to be extended by opening the office of deacons to sisters;

13. Letter from Deputies BBK (Deputies for relations with churches abroad)(15-05-2017): Advice not to proceed further at this point than the conclusion that in the light of Scripture it can be justified to open the offices to sisters, and to leave the decision to actually open the offices to the General Synod of 2020 at the earliest;
14. From the VGKSA (22-05-2017): written response to questions sent by the Synod Committee *M/F and Office*: under the influence of the 'new hermeneutic', present-day culture has become dominant in the report *Samen Dienen*; Genesis 3:16 is in itself not a curse; rather, the curse lies in the manner in which it functions after the Fall; hence, it is an artifice for the report to place this text in the after-the-Fall layer.

**Decision 1:**

To discharge the Deputies *Male/Female and Office*

Ground:

The Deputies *Male/Female and Office* have properly carried out the mandate given to them by the General Synod of Ede.

**Decision 2:**

To encourage the churches:

- a. to make grateful use, in instruction, pastorate and diaconate, of all the gifts that the Lord gives to both men and women.
- b. to make careful arrangements with regard to the appointment of men and women in various kinds of service that do not belong to the offices.

Grounds:

1. Next to men, women are also active at all levels in the congregation, without having been ordained to the office of minister, elder or deacon. They participate in the liturgy, in catechesis, and in committees and other positions (sometimes those of leadership). In recent years, this participation has become increasingly intensive, and that is a good thing.
2. Those who, serving in a special office, bear broad responsibility for the congregation must believe that they are called to this office, possess the necessary gifts, and by means of election and ordination are authorized by Jesus Christ to dedicate themselves to this task. This affords protection, both to the office-bearer and to the congregation. This protection is also important in relation to positions of service that do not belong to the offices.



### Decision 3:

To declare that there are Scriptural grounds to provide ample room for the deployment of the gifts of women in task areas such as preaching, instruction, pastorate and diaconate.

#### Grounds:

1. Under the Old Covenant, men fulfilled all the regular offices in the church, those of prophet, priest and king. They were anointed to these offices, as a sign of having been appointed to and equipped for them. It was also men who served in numerous extraordinary functions of leadership in the church, such as the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua and the Judges. Finally, men fulfilled the roles of elders in the community. The few exceptional cases where women occupied leadership (Deborah, Judges 4:4; Miriam, Micah 6:4) or prophetic roles (Deborah, Judges 4:4; Hannah, I Samuel 2:1-10; Huldah, II Kings 22:14; Mary, Luke 1:46-55; Anna, Luke 2:36), confirms this rule under the Old Covenant.
2. At the same time, in the story of the Old Covenant, the pivotal roles are portrayed that women have fulfilled among Gods people in the course of the history of salvation (Eve, Genesis 3:15; Sarah, Genesis 17:15,16; Tamar, Genesis 38:13ff; Jochebed, Exodus 1:22-2:10; Rahab, Joshua 2:2-7; Deborah, Judges 4 and 5; Ruth, Ruth 1:16,17; Esther, Esther 4:15,16; Mary, Luke 1:38). We also read the story of the woman in Revelation 12:1-6, who courageously endured the threats of the dragon. This story stands in stark contrast to the failures of men (Abraham, Genesis 12:12,13; Genesis 20:2; Judah, Genesis 38:24; Aaron, Exodus 32:2-6; Eli, I Samuel 1:14; David, II Samuel 11 and 12; Solomon, I Kings 11:1-8). In Matthew 1:17 the Lord reviews this history, holding it up as a mirror to the male leaders of the church of that time and of all ages, and as a warning to them.
3. Among those who lived under the Old Covenant, there was a yearning for the coming of the New. The New Testament reveals the fulfilment of that longing. In the coming of the God's unique Anointed One, our Lord Jesus Christ, thanks to his official ministry, and thanks to the anointing with his Spirit, God's people might truly be what they since the covenant of Mount Sinai had already been called, a 'royal priesthood' (Exodus 19:6; I Peter 2:9). For all of His people, His coming is at the same time the coming of and the anointing with the Spirit of prophecy (Acts 1:8,14 and 2:4), for which Moses had been hoping (Numbers 11:29), and of which the prophets spoke (Joel 3:1,2). It is the perspective of their freedom in Christ, in which there is no longer any difference between male and female (Galatians 3:28). All will be prophets, priests and kings. In the New Covenant, the law carved in stone, the law of commandments and regulations, has been set aside (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Ephesians 2:15-17; II Corinthians 3:6) because it, also and especially in relation to the ordering of the Old Testament offices, had proved to be ineffective (Hebrews 8:8) and declared to be obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). The New Covenant, characterized by equality, has replaced it. All will know the Lord, from the least of them to the greatest. (Jeremiah 31:34; Acts 2:17,18; I John 2:20,27).
4. For the Christian church, this revelation of the Old and New Testament gives cause for continuing reflection. Throughout the ages, until Christ's return, the church will have to critically examine itself: the ordering of its church life, the functions that according to Scripture are to be carried out in it, the roles that all its members, male and female, from the least to the greatest, are to fulfil in it. In this way it will be continually exhorted, with a view to the organization of the offices, to critically examine its own understanding of Scripture.



5. In response to this calling, Synod has come to the conclusion that the witness of Scripture gives the congregation every reason to allow men and women to serve equally in all prophetic, priestly and royal tasks in the church, tasks which their shared name as Christians addresses equally (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 12). Synod has further come to the conclusion that those places in which Scripture speaks of an apostolic command to keep silent, or a prohibition against women teaching or exercising authority, do not, in themselves, supply indisputable grounds to categorically exclude, in our time and circumstances, women from teaching and ruling offices in the church, since the exegesis of these texts is too greatly in dispute.
6. Within these offices, next to this equality there will also be distinctiveness, and men and women are called to mutual acceptance of each other in the place and manner in which they serve, in accordance with the various and distinctive talents they have been given.

**Decision 4:**

To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of mercy and therefore to the office of deacon.

Grounds:

1. According to the testimony of Scripture, in apostolic times women shared in the office of the deacons (I Timothy 3:11, 5:9), and they too were called 'deacons' (Romans 16:1-2).
2. The office of deaconess was also known in the early Christian church. In a number of Reformed churches this office still continues.

**Decision 5:**

To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of oversight, pastorate and instruction, and therefore to the office of elder.

Grounds:

1. Women such as Miriam and Deborah portray women in the Old Testament who, in collaboration with men, acted as rulers and judges.
2. They could also be called to this service by God Himself, as is evident from Micah 6:4, where the Lord teaches Israel: "I sent before you ... Miriam".
3. While the New Testament refers to men as elders, older women are also called to exemplary and pastoral tasks (Titus 2:3-5).
4. Paul's reference to Junia and her husband Andronicus as highly regarded apostles (Romans 16:7), and to other married couples as his fellow workers (Romans 16:3), and his mention of married couples and of a brother and sister, at whose home a church meets (Romans 16:5,15), create the impression that men and women, from a position of equality, together gave leadership in Christ's congregations.

**Decision 6:**

- a. To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, that next to men, women also, who have received the necessary gifts, may be given permission to preach; and hence to delete the word 'male' from Article 1 of



the general regulations governing permission to preach.

- b. To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of preaching and instruction, and therefore to the office of minister.

Grounds:

1. The Old Testament already makes mention of prophetesses (Exodus 15:20,21; Judges 4:4-7; II Kings 22:14), or of prophetic activity by women (I Samuel 2:1-10). In the New Testament also, already before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we read about prophetic activity by women. We note Mary and her *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55). We also read of Anna, who prophesied together with Simeon on the occasion of the infant Jesus' presentation in the temple, and who served the Lord day night and day in the temple (Luke 2:36-38).
2. The fulfilment of the promise of Pentecost (Joel 3:1-2; Acts 2:17-18) is that sons and daughters, young and old, will share in the gift of prophecy. The New Testament displays that reality. On the day of Pentecost the apostles, together with other disciples, among whom possibly women (Acts 1:14), anointed by the Holy Spirit, acted as Jesus' witnesses (Acts 1:8; 2:4-8). Other places, too, make mention of women who prophesied (Acts 21:8; I Corinthians 11:4-5).
3. The meaning of Scripture is that "*the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation*" (I Corinthians 14:3). This manner of prophesying applies to both men and women.
4. New Testament prophecy, as to its content, has always been understood within the Reformed tradition as the explanation of Holy Scripture, and a Spirit-guided application to the present day, specifically in the preaching.
5. While there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the precise interpretation of the apostolic command to 'be silent', comparative examination of I Corinthians 14:34 and I Corinthians 11:5 and 14:26 shows that in any case this prescription cannot be understood as an absolute prohibition to speak (or preach) in the worship service.

**Decision 7:**

To leave room to the local churches to determine for themselves whether, if so in what manner, and when they want to act in line with these decisions.

Grounds:

1. It is for each church to consider how the gifts given to its members are to be deployed, in order to bring the congregation further on the road to the kingdom of God.
2. Each church ought to follow its own process of reflection, and come to its own decision if, if so in what manner, and when they will take action in line with these decisions.

**Decision 8:**

To encourage the churches to engage in further reflection as to how justice can be done to the differences between men and women in the execution of tasks and offices in the congregation.

**Grounds:**

1. The Bible speaks about both the equal value and position of man and woman, and the distinctive place God has given them within it, in marriage and in the congregation. In our present-day culture, which is strongly oriented towards equality, this aspect deserves special attention.
2. The Bible repeatedly sounds warnings that man and women ought not to intrude into each others place, nor lord it over each other (I Peter 3:7, 4:15, 5:3; I Timothy 2:8-15; I Corinthians 14:34-35; III John:9).

**Decision 9:**

To send the decisions concerning *Male/Female and Office* to sister churches abroad.

**Ground:**

A number of sister churches abroad have responded in writing to the reports of Deputies, and/or participated in discussion of these reports during the days allocated to relations with churches abroad at the Synod.

**Decision 10:**

To appoint *Deputies Male/Female in the church*, with the following instructions:

1. To explain and provide further information concerning the shared service of men and women in the local churches and the classes;
2. To gather and develop material that will serve the process of reflection in the local churches and the classes;
3. To provide advice and guidance at points of difficulty regarding the decisions that have been taken (in collaboration with the Deputies for Church Polity);
4. To provide advice in relation to the ordination of men and women to tasks that belong, and do not belong, to the offices (co-ordinated with the Deputies for worship services);
5. To make an inventory of the manner in which the local churches and the classes deal with the decisions that have been taken (in collaboration with the *Praktijkcentrum*).

**Grounds:**

1. The decisions that have been taken call for careful communication with the churches
2. There is already a great deal of material available in the form of reports to Synods of 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017. However, it is good to develop a coherent package of materials for the benefit of the churches.
3. The decisions that have been taken regarding the joint service of men and women have a sizeable impact, and will be received in quite different ways. That is why it is beneficial for the churches to be able to turn to a single address to obtain advice in relation to these decisions.
4. Now that it is in the freedom of the churches whether and to how to take action in line with these decisions, it will be beneficial to gain an overview of the manner in which the churches respond to them.
5. An insight into what lives within the churches in relation to these decisions may assist determining whether, in the longer term, the offices need to be described or organized differently.

**Decision 11:**

To allocate a budget of € 20.500 in total to the Deputies *Male/Female in the church*.

**APPENDIX H****Response to Synod Meppel's Decisions to Open all Ecclesiastical Offices to Women****Table of Contents**

Introduction

1. Office of Deacon

Synod Decision 4

1 Timothy 3:11

1 Timothy 5:9

Romans 16:1–2

Deaconess in the Early Christian Church

Deaconesses in Reformed Churches

Conclusion

2. Office of Elder

Synod Decision 5

Deborah

Miriam

Titus 2:3–5

Romans 16

Conclusion

3. Minister of the Word

Synod Decision 6

Prophetesses

Prophesying in the New Testament Church

Is Scripture Clear?

Conclusion

## **Introduction**

On July 4, 2017, Synod Meppel officially informed all the church councils and classes of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) of their decisions to open all ecclesiastical offices to women. A copy of this official correspondence that included the full text of synod's decisions was sent to us in English translation. This document can be found as Appendix G to our report.

The synod made eleven decisions surrounding this topic. Three decisions gave specific grounds from Scripture and history to justify their decision. Since the biblical grounding for synod's decisions is critical for evaluation in the light of God's Word, this report will focus on those decisions and present a critique which, due to the nature of a report to synod, will of necessity be fairly brief.

The Dutch synod first decided on female ordination to the office of deacon, then elder, and finally minister of the Word. This report follows that order as well and uses the numbering that synod gave to their decisions.

## **Office of Deacon**

### **Synod Decision 4**

“To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of mercy and therefore to the office of deacon.”

Synod gave two grounds. The first one stated that “according to the testimony of Scripture, in apostolic times women shared in the office of the deacons (I Timothy 3:11, 5:9), and they too were called ‘deacons’ (Romans 16:1-2).”

We will consider each biblical reference in turn and so evaluate the grounds given.<sup>6</sup> After that we will consider the second ground of the synod for this particular decision.

### **1 Timothy 3:11**

This passage occurs in the middle of apostolic instructions on the qualifications necessary to be a deacon. After Paul stated that deacons must be men worthy of respect and so forth and that they must first be tested, he wrote: “Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things” (NASB).

The question is: who are the “women” mentioned in this passage? Are they the wives of deacons or are they female deacons? The Greek term in question can mean either “women” or “wives.” The term cannot mean “deaconess” even though such a translation is sometimes suggested.

Those who wish to understand the women as deaconesses argue that the word “likewise” suggests that the apostle is moving from discussing deacons to deaconesses. However, it is just as likely that the apostle means that as deacons must be dignified, so should their wives. Furthermore, it seems odd to continue right after this passage to again mention the qualifications for male deacons in verses 12–13, as if this reference to women is a mere afterthought. Such a flip-flop from deacon to deaconess and back to deacon in such a short passage (verses 8–13) is unnatural and unlikely.

---

<sup>6</sup>. More supporting information for the discussion on the office of deacon that follows can be found in Cornelis Van Dam, *The Deacon: Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy* (Grand Rapids: MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), 77–92, 113–30.

Furthermore, if the apostle had wanted his readers to know that he was now discussing female deacons, he would probably have been more specific and not used the term that can only be translated as “women” or “wives.”

It seems best to understand the women as the wives of deacons. The passage concerns deacons and their qualifications. Those qualifications include that they have spouses who are supportive of the diaconal work. After all, these wives could be expected to be involved in one form or another in their husband’s task as deacon by assisting him, especially when ministering to women.

There is no convincing basis to consider the women in 1 Timothy 3:11 as holding an official ordained office in the church. Not surprisingly, virtually all major English Bible translations prefer the rendering “women” or “wives” rather than “deaconess” or something similar.

### **1 Timothy 5:9**

1 Timothy 5:9–10 states: “Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work” (ESV).

If the criteria for these widows are any indication, these women were probably enrolled to continue their service of good works for which they justly had the reputation. As needed, their work could include taking care of orphans, giving godly advice to young mothers (cf. Titus 2:3–5), and showing hospitality. The question is whether this service of love involved their being ordained to diaconal office.

Those favoring the ordination of women as deaconesses argue that the Greek term for “enroll” can be understood as being selected for membership in a group with a special task. That task is then understood as an ordained office. Also, it is reasoned that since the apostle has mentioned qualifications for overseer (1 Tim 3:1–7) and for deacons (1 Tim 3:8–13) and discussed elders in 1 Timothy 5:17–19, he must also have been referring to ordained office when discussing enrolled widows in 1 Timothy 5.

These arguments do not convince that an ordained diaconal office is in view. The verb “to enroll” simply indicates making a selection for membership in a specific group. It has nothing to do with being ordained or appointed to office. The text also makes no mention of this. Furthermore, it was not necessary for widows to be ordained to an ecclesiastical office to do their diaconal work. Since we must not draw conclusions that go beyond the biblical evidence, one must judge that there is insufficient evidence for deciding that widows were ordained into diaconal office. These were unordained women who served the church with their labour of love. They can be an inspiration for female diaconal work in the church today.

### **Romans 16:1–2**

This passage reads: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well” (ESV)

In this and other translations such as the 1984 NIV, Phoebe is described as a servant which translates the Greek term *diakonos*. This word can also be translated as “deacon,” as, for example, in the 2011 NIV. Which should it be?

It is not enough to simply reason that since the word can be translated as “deacon” therefore it should be in this instance. The word *diakonos* is used many times in the New Testament to indicate a person who is of assistance to someone and is therefore translated as “servant” or something similar (e.g., Matt 20:26; 22:13; Rom 15:8). It is the context that must be decisive in determining whether the person in view is a deacon or more generally a servant or assistant.

There has been considerable debate, which we cannot enter into here, whether Phoebe was an ordained deacon or simply a servant of the church. The fact that this debate continues shows that at the end of the day, there is simply not enough information in Romans 16:1–2 to be able to conclude in any decisive manner that Phoebe was an ordained deaconess. The fact that the New Testament elsewhere gives male qualifications for the office of deacon (1 Tim 3:8–13) and nowhere else identifies a woman as a deacon underlines the dubiousness of concluding here that Phoebe must have been an ordained deacon.

### **Deaconess in the Early Christian Church**

Synod Meppel also invoked church history by stating as part of the second ground that “the office of deaconess was also known in the early Christian church.” No proof was given for this statement. In evaluating the weight that can be given to this ground, we need to consider the following facts.

First, there is no evidence that women were ordained as deaconesses in the first two centuries of the early Christian church. This fact indicates that the apostolic instructions regarding the offices in the church as recorded for us in the New Testament did not move the early Christians to ordain deaconesses. Indeed, the late first century *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (15:1) specifically instructed that men be selected as deacons.

Second, ordained female deacons only appeared later in the third century in the Eastern church. The third-century Syrian church order, *Didascalia Apostolorum* (chapter 16) explained the necessity for female deacons. They could visit and help women especially in corporal works of mercy in sickness. Also, female assistance was needed at the baptism of women for reasons of modesty. Finally, deaconesses were to educate newly baptized women in Christian purity and holiness. However, not all Eastern churches accepted the idea of female deacons. By the end of the eleventh century, deaconesses had basically disappeared from the Eastern church.

Third, there is no positive evidence of deaconesses in the Western church until about the sixth century. The ordination of women as deaconesses was not widely supported and frequently prohibited. In the Western church, a special order of unordained widows helped in the baptism of women. However, eventually the order of widows and the function of deaconesses were absorbed into the monastic movement. Female deacons disappeared by the twelfth or thirteenth century in the Western church.

In light of the above, the appearance of deaconesses in the early Christian church is not very convincing as a justification for ordained deaconesses today.

### **Deaconesses in Reformed Churches**

Synod Meppel's full second ground as justification for ordaining female deacons stated: "The office of deaconess was also known in the early Christian church. In a number of Reformed churches this office still continues."

The synod is in error to suggest that the office of deaconess continued from the early church until today. Deaconesses disappeared from parish churches before the Reformation of the sixteenth century and after the Reformation there was also no continuous ordination of women as deacons in Reformed churches.

Calvin wanted widows to serve in a second rank office of deacon but these women were not to be ordained. During the time of the Reformation Calvin's idea found little support because the biblical data did not convince the churches of the necessity of deaconesses. An exception was a decision made at an unofficial gathering of Reformed ministers known as the Colloquy of Wesel (1568). It thought it suitable that women be ordained as deaconesses. But the first official synod of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands (Emden 1571) made no mention of female deacons in their church-orderly decisions. Nevertheless, in 1573 the congregation of Wesel had four ordained female deacons to take care of the poor, sick, and expectant mothers. However, the Synod of Middelburg (1581) decided not to ordain women deacons. Should female help be needed for the diaconal ministry to sick women, then the wives of deacons or other capable women could be called in to help. Female deacons did continue to function for some time in various places, but they were not ordained.

The movement to ordain women as deaconesses in Reformed churches in the Netherlands and America started in the twentieth century. This movement met opposition on biblical grounds but eventually many Reformed churches ordained women into the diaconal office. In Canada, the church of L'Église réformée du Québec allows for the ordination of female deacons, but whether the practice is biblically justified is currently under discussion in this church.

### **Conclusion**

Synod Meppel's appeal to Scripture and early and Reformed church history is not convincing in terms of justifying the ordaining women to the office of deacon.

## **Office of Elder**

### **Synod Decision 5**

"To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of oversight, pastorate and instruction, and therefore to the office of elder."

We will give and evaluate the grounds for this decision in what follows.

## Deborah

Synod's first ground is that "women such as Miriam and Deborah portray women in the Old Testament who, in collaboration with men, acted as rulers and judges."

We will first focus on Deborah and discuss Miriam with Synod's second ground.

Is the fact that Deborah functioned as a judge and prophetess a valid reason to open up the office of elder to women today? The answer must be no when you consider the following.

A primary rule for the correct interpretation and application of Scripture is to place the passage in question within its biblical context. Deborah lived in the days of the judges. In these critical times Israel cried to the LORD for help and God used Deborah to give deliverance.

It is important to note how the LORD introduced Deborah and how he involved her for the salvation of his people. We read that "Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment" (Judg 4:4-5 ESV). With the preceding two crises, the Hebrew expression "the LORD raised up a deliverer" (Judg 3:9, 15) is used. We also frequently read of the judges being empowered by the Spirit for their military task (Judg 3:10; 6:345; 11:29; 14:19; 15:14). Remarkably, these expressions are not used with Deborah. Rather she is introduced as a prophetess and not a military leader.

As a prophetess she was judging Israel, that is, in the context of Judges, Deborah was leading Israel as a prophetess. When people came to her for God's judgment she spoke God's Word and so led his people. As a result, she summoned Barak and gave him God's command to mobilize ten thousand men to defeat the foe (Judg 4:5-7). To calm his fears, she accompanied him and so as spokesperson for the LORD gave tangible expression to the fact that God himself would go with Barak and give him the victory.

Deborah is never pictured as a military leader of Israel, a judge in the sense of Othniel or Gideon. She was a prophetess. Although she gave leadership through her prophetic task, she is not described in Scripture as the judge who delivered Israel from Sisera. Rather it is God who is specified as the deliverer of Israel (Judg 4:23) and he used another woman, Jael, to kill Sisera (Judg 4:21). Deborah's subordinate role as prophetess and not as military leader is also evident from the fact that God did not send Deborah to head the troops into battle, but Barak. Furthermore, when Samuel would later mention deliverers of Israel (1 Sam 12:11), he did not mention Deborah, but he did name Barak, the commander. Similarly, Deborah is not mentioned with the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, although several judges, including Barak (v. 32) are, but not Deborah. All of this underlines her relatively modest role with respect to the deliverance of Israel.

Deborah's function as prophetess was an exception within an exceptional situation. The fact that she was also known as the wife of Lappidoth could indicate the ad hoc character of her office. People came to her in the current circumstances for God spoke through her, but there is no record of her going out and prophesying among the people. Without taking anything away from her being a prophetess, it should not be forgotten that she is also identified as a married woman, indeed as "a

mother in Israel” (5:7). Her prophetic office was not everything. She also fulfilled a woman’s normal place in Israelite life.

Can Deborah function as an example for us to follow for today by ordaining women into the office of elder? The answer is clearly no. The situation in Israel was desperate and by way of exception God raised her up as a prophet in Israel. In this way God enabled her to pass on God’s command that Barak (and not Deborah) summon and command a military force against the enemy (Judg 4:6-7). God’s use of a woman and her need to accompany Barak were an implicit condemnation of the lack of male leadership in Israel (cf. Judg 4:8-10) and was akin to a disaster (cf. Isa 3:12). It showed that things had gone terribly wrong. Deborah is therefore not an example to be followed and her situation provides no justification to open the leadership offices of the church to women. But, as Calvin noted on 1 Timothy 2:12, God is sovereign and he can do in extraordinary circumstances what we are not allowed to do. He therefore did use Deborah in a special way for his service.

### **Miriam**

Synod Meppel also gave as second ground that Miriam and Deborah “could also be called to this service by God Himself, as is evident from Micah 6:4, where the Lord teaches Israel: “I sent before you ... Miriam.”

Miriam’s leading Israel refers to an event after the Israelites had left Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and the LORD had drowned the pursuing Egyptian forces. Then “Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: ‘Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea’” (Exod 15:20-21). Miriam led the women in song. She is identified as “the prophetess.” What does this mean?

With respect to her identity as a prophetess, it is possible that Miriam received revelation from God (cf. Num 12:2) as one would expect from a prophet (cf. Exod 7:1-2), but Scripture nowhere indicates that she publicly proclaimed new prophecy. The public prophetic act of this prophetess was singing with a musical instrument and exhorting praise to God.

There are also indications elsewhere in Scripture that praising God and declaring his great deeds constitute prophesying. Saul, for example, met a procession of prophets with musical instruments prophesying and the Spirit came on him and he prophesied as well (1 Sam 10:5-11). This prophesying can best be understood as praising God. Another example that can be mentioned is when David set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of music in the temple. This ministry is then described as “the ministry of prophesying” and the singers are described as prophesying when they thank and praise the LORD (1 Chron 25:1-3). Consistent with the nature of this musical ministry, the leaders of the temple song are called seers or prophets (1 Chron 25:5; 2 Chron 35:15) and the poet Asaph is also called a seer or prophet (2 Chron 29:30).

Miriam’s prophetic task can therefore be seen in her music and singing ministry—an activity also associated with Deborah, the prophetess, when she with Barak, sang a song extolling God’s deliverance (Judg 5:1). And like Deborah, Miriam as prophetess gave needed leadership to Israel, along with Moses and Aaron (Micah 6:4). Her leadership was for the women of Israel since they were

the ones who followed her (Exod 15:20). In his sermon on Micah 6, Calvin notes that even though Miriam was a woman, God gave her this leadership role “in order that she might strengthen women.” In his commentary on this passage, he notes that “it was an extraordinary thing, when God gave authority to a woman . . . no one may consider this singular precedent as a common rule.” Indeed, how true.

It is noteworthy that synod’s decision ignores the fact that God punished Miriam with leprosy when she challenged the leadership of Moses (Num 12). Furthermore, Micah 6:4 is the only time that Miriam is mentioned as a leader along with Moses and Aaron. She is not mentioned in other places where the LORD says that he sent Moses and Aaron as leaders (Josh 24:5; 1 Sam 12:8; Ps 105:26). Her leadership in leading the women in singing at that one exceptional event cannot function as an argument for ordaining women to the ruling and leadership offices of the church.

### **Titus 2:3–5**

The third argument synod used to justify ordaining women to the office of elder is: “While the New Testament names older men as elders, older women are also called upon to be an example and to spiritual care (Titus 2:3–5).”

The point of this argument seems to be that while older men are called to be elders (their qualifications are given in Titus 1), older women are addressed in chapter 2 and charged to do certain things which to the Synod seems to intimate that they too had an office. But this sort of logic does not hold. After giving the qualifications for the office of elder in chapter 1, the apostle next addresses different groups in the congregation. He first mentions the duties of older men “to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness” (Titus 2:2). The apostle then continued that “older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train young women to love their husbands and children” and so forth (Titus 2:3–5). After that the apostle addressed the younger men and slaves (Titus 2:6–10). There is no talk of office in Titus 2. Here the apostle gives instructions to the entire congregation. To seek justification for female ordination to ecclesiastical offices from the admonition that older women should be an example of Christian conduct to others simply does not hold.

### **Romans 16**

Synod’s fourth ground is: “Paul’s description of Junia and Andronicus as apostles who were greatly esteemed (Rom 16:7) or of other couples as his co-workers (Rom 16:3) and his mentioning couples and a brother and sister in whose home a congregation meets (Rom 16:5, 15) create the impression that man and wife gave leadership in Christ’s congregation in positions of equal standing.”

It is difficult to understand how this fourth ground can give any support to the notion of women elders. In the first place, to suggest that Andronicus and Junia are a man and wife couple is saying more than what the text states. It does say that they are fellow Jews who were in prison with Paul. Furthermore, it is far from certain that Junia (or Junias as it can also be written) was a female.

There are strong arguments to insist that it could be a man's name.<sup>7</sup> In addition, it needs to be ascertained what exactly is meant by the term "apostle"? Before discussing that it should also be noted that the text can not only be translated as "they [Andronicus and Junia] are outstanding among the apostles" (NIV 2011) but also as "they are esteemed by the apostles" (footnote in NIV 2011). The translation that they were apostles is one interpretation of the Greek, but other translations which remove Junia's identity as an apostle are also possible and indeed may very well be preferable.<sup>8</sup>

So what does the term "apostle" mean here? It should be stressed that the term can mean different things. It does not need to refer to the apostolic office such as Paul had. The first meaning of the original Greek term is "messenger." Paul used it in this sense in 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25. So why could he not have used it with the sense of "messenger" here as well? The indications are that this is the case if the translation "among the apostles" is chosen. These "apostles" would be messengers. After all, the reference to the English word "apostles" is always those personally chosen by Christ. And these apostles were all male.

In summary, Romans 16:7 cannot be used to prove that there was a female apostle in the days of Paul. There too many uncertainties to make this claim.

The Synod also refers to a couple mentioned in Romans 16:3, namely, Priscilla and Aquila. This Christian couple had taken Apollos aside in Ephesus "and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). This was clearly private instruction and not official ecclesiastical work. Priscilla did not participate in this teaching as a female office bearer (cf. also 1 Cor 16:19). Synod's references to Romans 16:5 and 15 prove nothing with respect to women in ecclesiastical office in the apostolic church.

## Conclusion

Synod's arguments for female ordination to the office of elder are unconvincing. Furthermore, Synod's apparent refusal to let the full weight of the clear apostolic teaching on the requirements for a male eldership in the church (1 Tim 3 and Titus 1) come to bear on their decision-making process is unreasonable. Synod's decision to open the office of elder to women is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture.

## Minister of the Word

### Synod Decision 6

Synod Meppel decided:

"a. To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, that next to men, women also, who have received the necessary gifts, may be given permission to preach; and hence to delete the word 'male' from Article 1 of the general regulations governing permission to preach.

---

<sup>7</sup>. See especially Al Wolters, "IOYNIAN (Romans 16:7) and the Hebrew Name *Yēhunnī*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 397–408.

<sup>8</sup>. For a summary of the debate and defence for the translation "well-known to the apostles" or something similar, see Michael Burer, "Rom 16:7 as 'Well Known to the Apostles': Further Defense and New Evidence," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58 (2015): 731–56. ESV (2016), NET Bible (2005) render "well known to the apostles"; Christian Standard Bible (2017) translates "noteworthy in the eyes of the apostles."

b. To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of preaching and instruction, and therefore to the office of minister.”

Synod gave five grounds for this decision. We will consider each in turn.

### **Prophetesses**

Synod’s first ground was that: “the Old Testament already makes mention of prophetesses (Exod 15:20–21; Judg 4:4–7; 2 Kings 22:14) or of prophetic activity by women (1 Sam 2:1–10). In the New Testament also, already before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we read of prophetic activity by women. We note Mary and her Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55). We also read of Anna, who prophesied together with Simeon on the occasion of the infant Jesus’ presentation in the temple, and who served the Lord day and night in the temple (Luke 2:36–38).”

We saw earlier in this report how Miriam (Exod 15:20–21) and Deborah (Judg 4:4–7) were both exceptional in their function as prophetesses. Their work cannot function as a paradigm and basis for female participation in the office of the elder, including that of the teaching elder, the minister of the gospel. The appearance of the prophetess Huldah (2 Kings 22:14) and the mention of Isaiah’s wife as a prophetess (Isa 8:3) are also rare exceptions in the midst of the many male prophets that are mentioned elsewhere. Indeed, apart from the examples just mentioned there are no other instances of true prophetesses in the Old Testament. Mary’s song of praise or Magnificat has similarities with the Old Testament song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1–10) but like Hannah she too is not called a prophetess. With respect to Anna, the prophetess, her prophetic activity consisted of “worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day” in the temple. When Jesus was presented, “she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:37–38).

All the instances of prophetesses underline the fact that God is able to raise up whomever he wishes for special service. But such instances do not form a pattern for us to follow, especially if God gives clear guidelines for the office of teaching elder elsewhere in Scripture (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–8). Synod’s first justification for admitting women to the ministerial office is therefore not convincing.

The next three grounds all deal with prophesying.

### **Prophesying in the New Testament Church**

The second argument which Synod Meppel used to justify female ordination into the office of minister of the Word is as follows. “The fulfillment of the promise of Pentecost (Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:17–18) is that sons and daughters, old and young, will share in the gift of prophecy. The New Testament displays that reality. On the day of Pentecost the apostles, together with other disciples, among whom possibly women (Acts 1:14), anointed by the Holy Spirit, acted as Jesus’ witnesses (Acts 1:8; 2:4–8). Other places, too, make mention of women who prophesied (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 11:4–5).”

When Peter proclaimed that Joel’s prophecy was being fulfilled (Acts 2:17–18), he was explaining the striking phenomenon that all the believers, young and old, male and female, were telling “the mighty works of God” (Acts 2:11). Thus prophesying as explained by Peter is telling the great acts of God. One can say that by receiving the Spirit-given ability to tell the saving deeds of God to others, all believers are thus equipped to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this sense, all believers have the

prophetic office and calling. As we confess in the Heidelberg Catechism, we share in Christ's anointing and as prophets we "confess his name" (Lord's Day 12). However, the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy on the day of Pentecost involved more than this general prophetic office of all believers.

The context of Peter's referencing Joel's prophecy is that the Holy Spirit came down upon the believers and they "began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The result was that when people came to see what was happening they heard the mighty works of God each in their own language (Acts 2:8, 11). In response to those who mocked this speaking in other tongues, the apostle Peter declared that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled. Thus not only the gift of prophecy but also of tongues were involved in this fulfillment.

In light of the above, one cannot use Joel's prophecy to justify female ordination. The fulfillment of this prophecy does not address it. Furthermore, when it comes to spreading the gospel in an official capacity, Christ did specifically address the apostles to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:13; Luke 24:48; cf. Acts 13:31, 47; Col 1:23). It can also be noted that although Peter proclaimed that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled, neither he nor the other apostles used this to advocate the ordination of women. To the contrary.

Synod's second argument also mentions "women who prophesied (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 11:4-5)." This brings us to Synod's third and fourth grounds.

The third ground for the ordination of female pastors is: "the meaning of Scripture is that '*the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation*' (1 Cor 14:3). This manner of prophesying applies to both men and women,"

The fourth ground for female ministers is that "New Testament prophecy, as to its content, has always been understood within the Reformed tradition as the explanation of Scripture, and a Spirit-guided application to the present day, specifically in the preaching."

When considering these grounds, the key question is what is meant by prophesying in the passages that the synodical decision references? To answer that question, we will especially concentrate on 1 Corinthians since this is where the biblical proof for the third ground comes from. Prophecy is a special gift of the Spirit (1 Cor 14:1, 14) which was given to both men and women (1 Cor 11:4-5; also cf. Acts 21:9). It involved passing on revelation from God. This is evident from the close association of prophecy and revelation in 1 Corinthians 14. The apostle instructs: "Let two or three prophets speak, and let others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (1 Cor 14:29-32). These verses form part of the apostle Paul's instruction for orderly worship. Significantly he earlier introduced this section by writing: "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up" (1 Cor 14:26). By including "revelation" he clearly alludes to prophesying as his subsequent instructions show (vv. 29-32).

The revelatory character of prophecy is also seen by the apostle's closely associating the gift of prophesy with understanding "all mysteries." He wrote: "If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2). A mystery is that which

God needs to reveal. It is hidden to human beings. The apostle Paul considered himself to be steward of God's mysteries (1 Cor 4:1) which means that God used him to reveal what would otherwise have been hidden. As he wrote to the Corinthians: "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Cor 15:51–52). Similarly, he wrote to the Roman Christians: "I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Rom 11:25–27).

Dr. Richard Gaffin, emeritus professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, has shown in more detail than is possible here that the revelation given by the prophets in the New Testament church was "on a par and of one piece with the inspired revelation received and proclaimed by Paul and the other apostles." Furthermore, revelation given through prophecy did not address "individualistic, purely localized interests, but concerns, along with apostolic revelation, the salvation in Christ with its rich and manifold implications for the faith and life of the church."<sup>9</sup> Thus, it is not difficult to see that "the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3).

It needs to be recognized however that such a special revelatory prophetic gift was part of the foundation of the church and thus a temporary gift. And so, seeing that "the foundation of the apostles and prophets" has been laid with "Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph 2:20), such special prophetic gifts have ceased to be given to the church. As a result, the New Testament passages dealing with prophecy that are mentioned in the decision are not applicable as grounds for female ordination in the church today.<sup>10</sup>

### **Is Scripture Clear?**

Synod's fifth and final argument: "While there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the precise interpretation of the apostolic command to 'be silent', comparative examination of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:26 shows that in any case this prescription cannot be understood as an absolute prohibition to speak (or preach) in the worship service."

This last argument is premised on the fact that Scripture is not clear since "there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the precise interpretation of the apostolic command to 'be silent.'" Is this true? The apostle wrote: "when you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation" (1 Cor 14:26). These words reflect the situation in the apostolic era when God gave special gifts of revelation and tongues to both male and female (1 Cor 11:4–5). With the completion of the canon of Scripture, there is no reason to think that God will continue to give new authoritative revelation through the gift of prophecy. However, in the apostolic church revelations were received, but one had to be able to distinguish between true and false prophecy or revelation (1 Cor 14:29). In that context, the apostle charged that women were to be silent because judging prophecy could involve exercising authority over a male prophet which was not fitting for women since they

---

<sup>9</sup> Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost: Studies in New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 62.

<sup>10</sup> On the foundation character and cessation of the gift of prophecy, see Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 93–102.

“should be in submission” (1 Cor 14:34). The fact that women were to be silent in that particular context was so important that this command was repeated three times (1 Cor 14:34–35).

A basic principle underlying the demand for the silence of women is that they should be in submission in accordance with the creation order as taught in the Law, that is, the Five Books of Moses, and specifically Genesis, chapter 2 (1 Cor 14:34; cf. 11:8–9). Similarly, God’s Word elsewhere says: “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:11–13). In other words, it is not fitting for women and their role over against men to speak publicly in church. This inappropriateness is not confined to the apostolic church since the reason for the submission of women is grounded in the order of the creation of male and female.<sup>11</sup>

In light of the above, Synod Meppel’s final argument is unconvincing and does injustice to the clarity of Scripture, especially in light of the Bible’s requirements for the teaching and preaching office as spelled out elsewhere in Scripture (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–8) and the prohibition that a woman may not teach in church (1 Tim 2:12). If one part of Scripture is not completely clear to us, it should be interpreted in light of the more clear passages.

### **In Conclusion**

It is very difficult not to sense that the egalitarian culture of our times has had an enormous influence on Synod Meppel’s reasoning which does not at all convince.<sup>12</sup> Scripture has clearly reserved the teaching and preaching office for qualified males (1 Tim 3:2–7; 5:17; 2 Tim 4:1–2; Titus 1:5–9) but the Synod makes no mention of these passages, apparently because they did not fit its vision for the office of minister.

---

<sup>11</sup>. For more a more detailed biblical discussion than is possible here, see, e.g., George W. Knight III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 29–32, 36–40.

<sup>12</sup>. See also our *Response to chapter 2, “Bijbelse bouwstenen”* (January 2017) of the report that served Synod Meppel. It is Appendix D to our full report.

## APPENDIX I



Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland  
Meppel 2017

Postadres: Postbus 770  
3800 AT Amersfoort  
Bezoekadres: Conferentiecentrum  
Mennorode  
Apeldoornseweg 185  
8075 PJ Elspeet  
Telefoon: 06 31 684 729  
E-mail: [synode@gkv.nl](mailto:synode@gkv.nl)  
Internet: [www.gkv.nl](http://www.gkv.nl)

To the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
CRCA Sub-Committee on Relations with Churches in the Netherlands  
C/- Gerard J. Nordeman  
per email: [gnordeman@cogeco.ca](mailto:gnordeman@cogeco.ca)

Almelo, the Netherlands, 13 September 2017  
Regarding: Response of the General Synod of Meppel to your letter  
Our reference: 53-D-3-170913 - CanRC

Esteemed brothers,

In your letter dated October 18, 2016, our agenda item 53-D-3, you wrote to the General Synod of Meppel, 2017, of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, in relation to the suspension of sister church relations.

Synod has made a decision concerning this matter, a copy of which is attached herewith. On behalf of Synod, I request that you receive our delegates, in order to enable them to provide you with an oral explanation of our decision.

I trust that this information will be of service to you.

Yours in Christ,  
On behalf of the General Synod,

Rev. Frans Wisselink,  
Scriba II.



BBK / letters  
16 June 2017

**Materials:**

1. Letter from GS Ede 2014 to the CanRC + 5 attachments, (01-12-2014);
2. Letter from GS Ede 2014 to the FRCA + 5 attachments, (01-12-2014);
3. Letter from GS Ede 2014 to the RCUS + 5 attachments, (01-12-2014);
4. Letter from Synod Baldivis of the FRCA 2015 (01-07-2015);
5. Letter from Synod of the RCUS (04-10-2016);
6. Letter from Synod of the CanRC 2016 (18-10-2016).

**Decision 1:**

in the light of the instruction of Scripture regarding the need for self-examination (I Corinthians 11), to appeal to the CanRC, the FRCA and the RCUS not to close the door to substantive discussion at synodical level, and to urge them not to prematurely break off the bond with the GKv, but to continue serving us and each other as churches of Jesus Christ in the world, especially when our insights differ.

**Grounds:**

1. The discussion with these sister churches has not been concluded, since none of them has responded to the letter sent to them by the General Synod of Ede.
2. As much as possible, sister churches are to support each other in upholding, promoting and defending the Reformed Confessions, in accordance with Scripture, in doctrine, discipline and worship (rule 1, to which the GKv have obligated themselves in their relations with sister churches).
3. Since the GKv wish to remain bound to the confession of God's Word, there is no cause to review the sister church relationship.
4. Mutual support to and from our sister churches is a Biblical calling (I Corinthians 12:14-26)

**Decision 2:**

to declare that, notwithstanding the intended curtailment of sister church relations by the CanRC, the FRCA and the RCUS, we from our side see no cause to review our sister church relationship.

**Grounds:**

1. As regards confession, church government, discipline and worship practice, there is no cause for such limitation.
2. The decisions of these sister churches need not induce us to reciprocate.

**Decision 3:**

to appoint the praeses and assessor of General Synod, together with the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad, to personally deliver letters to the CanRC, the FRCA and the RCUS, in order to facilitate a face-to-face explanation of our decision.

**Grounds:**

1. Sending a delegation on behalf of the General Synod to accompany the customary delegate from the Deputies BBK will serve to demonstrate our genuine desire for engagement and goodwill.
2. A face-to-face meeting will enhance opportunities for sound reciprocal communication.

## APPENDIX J

### Developments in the relationship between the Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) and the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken, between 2014 and 2017.

General Synod Dunnville 2016 (Acts Art 104, rec.4.4.5) gave the Subcommittee for contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (lib.) the mandate *to monitor the ongoing discussions between the GKv and the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NGK)*.

However – when we read the report written by the GKv “Deputaten Kerkelijke Eenheid (DKE) to the GKv Synod Meppel 2017 it is good to notice that these deputies are involved in more discussions with a number of different churches in The Netherlands.

This has been triggered by changing circumstances in the GKv

- Doors have opened for more and more local contacts and conversations with other churches and church groups.
- This leads to more ‘faith recognition’ with other believers, beyond the walls of the churches.
- Especially for young people church boundaries no longer mean anything. They experience unity-of-faith separate from institutional structures.

In the first chapter of their report, under the title “...in eenheid van het ware geloof...”, DKE reflect extensively and in depth on the whole matter of ecclesiastical unity, and what the goals are that the churches should strive for<sup>13</sup>.

It is important to give this some more detailed attention to understand where the GKv is going with its ecumenical contacts, and why this is.

The Deputies state that they want to take as starting point the teaching of God’s Word with regard to the church, as summarized in LD 21 of the H.C., which emphasizes that Christ gathers his church ‘in the unity of the true faith’.

They then describe how this ‘unity of true faith’ led to striving for ecclesiastical unity with other churches, on the basis of the Reformed confessions. But this has changed. Today they also exercise what they call ‘ecclesiastical contacts’ with other Christian

---

<sup>13</sup> The philosophy behind this and the paradigms that should govern this development have been outlined by one of the deputies in a 10-page document: *Als het tij verloopt verzet men de bakens* (literal: “when the tide changes, one must shift the beacons), meaning: “when the times/circumstances change, we have to adopt new methods/policies”. This document is added to the DKE report as an appendix. Important reading to learn what drives the changes in the GKv.

churches, with which they also experience this 'unity of faith', despite theological differences.

This came about in particular with the participation of the GKv in the so-called "National Synod". The DKE claim that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have the responsibility to acknowledge this and to find ways to do justice to this 'unity of faith'. Therefore they propose to maintain and expand those conversations as official "ecclesiastical contacts", even if "ecclesiastical unity" is not possible, because of significant theological/confessional differences.

Deputies do acknowledge that what we have and share in Christ cannot be separated from what we know and confess about Christ. They recognize how often the Bible warns against the danger of false teachings, and how often we are urged to maintain and protect the true doctrine. But those warnings and this need for doctrinal discernment do not seem to function when they stress the ongoing calling to strive for unity, as part of the ongoing sanctification of God's people. There is indeed a call to seek unity. But there is also the call to obedience. And the question can be asked: is the joyful recognition of this growing unity of faith evidence of a growing and deepening obedience to God's Word?

As the DKE envisage this process to develop, they distinguish between unity in faith / unity in Christ as the foundation, and ecclesiastical unity as a unity in what is being built on this foundation. The terminology comes from 1 Cor.3, where the apostle Paul distinguishes between Jesus Christ as the foundation of the church and the different ways in which people build on this foundation.

But the exegesis of this passage and how it is used by the deputies in the above-mentioned context is very questionable – to say the least! For Paul the variety of building material when people claim to build on the one foundation is reason for a serious warning, whereas for DKE such variety is acceptable pluriformity. Even if ecclesiastical unity is not yet, or perhaps never possible, unity of faith between churches can be experienced and practiced.

Deputies do not suggest that such ecclesiastical contacts in unity of faith should be entirely without any limitations. While ecclesiastical unity can only be established, based on Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity, unity of faith can be found with the Nicene Creed as basis.

But this also leads to many questions. How do the Confessions of the Reformation relate to the Ecumenical Creeds? Is there a contrast? The things in the Three Forms of Unity that are not mentioned in the Nicene Creed – are they less relevant or less biblical? Or do the churches in the 16<sup>th</sup> century simply expand what was already present in the early Creeds? Unfortunately DKE do not confront themselves with these matters.

The result of this is now that DKE do not only report on the ongoing discussions with the CGK and the NGK in view of possible ecclesiastical unity, as they have done for years, but also on a number of initial contacts with other churches in The Netherlands:

The Hersteld Hervormde Kerk (HHK), the Voortgezette Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (VGKN) and the Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN).

Besides those contacts, via the DKE, the GKv are also involved in other bodies that promote ecclesiastical cooperation: The Contact Orgaan Gereformeerde Gezindte (COGG), The Nationale Synode/Protestants Forum and the Raad van Kerken in Nederland (RvK: National Council of Churches).

We have not studied and monitored all those contacts in the past, and we don't need to do this now. The alarming developments in the GKv have already gone beyond that.

But it is good to be aware that in the big picture openness toward a wide range of ecumenical contacts cannot be isolated from the dramatic changes we observe within the GKv.

When we focus on the mandate given in art.104 of the Acts of GS Dunnville 2016, we have to look in particular at

- A. Developments in the relationship between the GKv and the NGK,
- B. Developments regarding the GKv participation in the National Synod.

A. Contacts with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken

Observations gleaned from the DKE report for GS Meppel 2017

1. The discussions between GKv and NGK, in view of working towards ecclesiastical unity, continued between GS Ede 2014 and GS Meppel 2017. In mutual consultation the following topics were identified to focus on:
  - a. Comparing the Church Order (CO) of the GKv with the Akkoord voor Kerkelijk Samenleven (AKS) of the NGK, including the matter of binding to the confession, and how this functions within the NGK.
  - b. Women and Office<sup>14</sup>
  - c. The sacraments
  - d. The request of the NGK to open the pulpits for each other's ministers.
2. The deputies have noticed that, while there is growing mutual trust between the GKv and the NGK, there are still fears, hesitations, concerns and questions among the members of both church federations. They conclude that, despite the fact that in several places local GKv and NGK congregations have some form of cooperation, these misgivings require that moving towards ecclesiastical unity needs patience.

---

<sup>14</sup> The NGK decided in 2005 to open all offices for women.

3. In 2016 the NGK decided that the offices in the church will not be open for practicing homosexuals who live together in a relationship of love and fidelity.
4. The majority of DKE concluded that in the practice of the NGK the binding to the reformed confession has become more and more similar to the practice in the GKv. However – in connection with this the deputies also acknowledge that this is not so much the result of a more firm binding in the NGK. They observe that in the GKv much has changed with regard to how the binding to the confession is experienced.
5. Concerning the issue of female elders and ministers in the NGK – the DKE did not give this much attention in their discussions with the NGK in the time between GS Ede (2014) and GS Meppel (2017). In 2014 Synod Ede had again appointed committees to study this matter, and the DKE realized that future discussions with the NGK about this topic would depend on the outcome of these studies and on a possible decision of the 2017 Synod.
6. The majority of the DKE proposed a new ‘general regulation’ for cooperation with the NGK, which would include the rule that ministers in the NGK are declared authorized to preach in the GKv, and that members of the NGK can be admitted to the Lord’s Supper and received as members in the GKv as well.

### Minority Report

A minority of three members of the DKE presented an additional report to Synod Meppel. They analyse in particular the developments in the contacts and discussions with the NGK, as well as the approach of the DKE in light of previous synodical decisions concerning this ecclesiastical process.

The three brothers offer a very critical analysis of what has been and what is still going on.

Among other valuable observations, they come to two significant conclusions:

- a. In the discussions with the NGK the DKE has consistently failed to address the most crucial matters for the relationship: the binding to the confession, and the question how to deal with office bearers who disagree with parts of the reformed confessions.
- b. The issues which 50 years ago caused the split between the NGK and the GKv are now by DKE themselves presented as, not only valid, but even necessary topics to be considered within the GKv.  
This confirms what we, as subcommittee for contact with the GKv, did already report to GS Carman 2013 and GS Dunnville 2016: the fact that the GKv and the NGK have grown so much closer together in the last eight years, is not because the NGK has changed and become more reformed, but because the GKv has become more and more like the NGK (see also under ‘observation’ #4).

It is remarkable and regrettable, but at the same time very telling, that in the decision of GS Meppel about the relationship with the NGK the important analysis and conclusions of this additional minority report are simply completely ignored.

### General Synod Meppel 2017

In the meantime Synod Meppel made the decision that women can be called to serve as ministers, elders and deacons in the GKv. This step will have a number of repercussions, but when it comes to the relationship with the NGK, we have no doubt that it will work as a catalyst to accelerate the process of ecclesiastical unification.

Synod Meppel concluded that with this decision an important obstacle for unity between the GKv and the NGK has been removed. Synod also observes with deep joy that God gives them the gift of renewed spiritual unity with the brothers and sisters in the NGK.

Based on the observation that there are no longer essential differences between both church federations, Synod Meppel decided:

- to instruct DKE to do all that is required to prepare a reunification of both church federations, and
- to accept the invitation of the NGK for a joint meeting of this Synod with National Assembly [of the NGK] aimed at reunification.

This meeting has been scheduled for November 11, 2017, to be held in Kampen.

## APPENDIX K



deputaten **B**etrekkingen **B**uitenlandse **K**erken  
Committee on relations with churches abroad of the Reformed churches in The Netherlands

To the sisterchurches of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

Zwolle, 23 December 2016

Esteemed brothers,

At this moment the Theological University in Kampen is involved in a process of exploring the possibilities of constituting a Reformed Theological University together with different reformed denominations in The Netherlands.

In the past several sisterchurches have expressed their concerns regarding the biblical standards of the Theological University of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. Therefore we would like to be transparent and provide insight to our sisterchurches in the Biblical confessional and basic principles of theological education and research which are endorsed by the Theological University in Kampen. Please, find enclosed an English translation of chapter 2 of the report 'Moving forward together, in His service, to a Reformed Theological University'. The reformed identity described in this document can be seen as the hermeneutical principals of the Theological University in Kampen.

By sending this document we hope to serve you and your churches.  
Wishing you a merry Christmas and the blessing of our Lord in the new year to come!

Yours in Christ,  
With warm greetings,

  
ds. M.H. Oosthuis, general secretary BBK

deputaten **B**etrekkingen **B**uitenlandse **K**erken  
committee on relations with churches abroad of the Reformed churches in The Netherlands

P.O. BOX 499  
T: (+31) (0) 38 427 0 470

8000 AL ZWOLLE  
E: [info@bbk.nl](mailto:info@bbk.nl)

THE NETHERLANDS  
W: [www.bbk.gkv.nl](http://www.bbk.gkv.nl)

## **Chapter 2 of “Moving forward together, in his service, to a Reformed Theological University” Steering group report GTU – November 7th 2016**

### **Identity**

#### **A new start on the same foundation**

In the Reformed Theological University reformed denominations, each with its own colour and origin and each with its own distinct church-life, come together. Despite differences in style and perception they all belong to “the reformed tradition” and within this tradition, share a common bond in their heartfelt confession of faith based on the Bible and the Three Forms of Unity. Members of the churches concerned have long since met and recognised one another, in various contexts: in education and in welfare, in political and in social organisations. During the last decennia there has also been a strong growth in the exchange between churches such as through pulpit exchange, as well as various forms of cooperation in theological areas. There has been an intensive and fruitful cooperation between the TUA, TUK and the NGP by way of research groups that were integrated 15 years ago. Theologians from the Gereformeerde Bond and the Hersteld Hervormd Seminarie have been involved in joint publications, congresses and cooperative projects. A clear sign of the increased trust and mutual recognition is the cooperation there is with regards to the publication of The Netherlands’ largest theological magazine, *Theologia Reformata*. For some time now an awareness has existed of a connection in faith and a mutual responsibility for reformed theology in our country.

In the initiative of the Reformed Theological University the lines mentioned cross each other. The Reformed Theological University is introducing a new, and further reaching phase in the process of interuniversity and inter-ecclesiastical cooperation on reformed grounds, and will give this cooperation more body. The goal hereof is to create a stimulus for the practice of theology in the full spectrum of the reformed tradition. Under God’s blessing the Reformed Theological University wishes to give a new élan to the training and equipping of theological students for their task in the church, the academic world and society. A first condition that needs to be met is a mutual and shared conviction concerning the identity and foundation of the Reformed Theological University. All of the parties that support the Reformed Theological University, accept completely and without reservation the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God and commit themselves to the reformed confessions, as being an apt putting to words of truth given in the Bible. In this, the Holy Scriptures have the ultimate authority. Basing ourselves on this foundation has consequences for the way we deal with the Bible, and for our vision concerning theology and the meaning theology has for the church and for society. This is elaborated further in the preamble of the Reformed Theological University. The framework texts in this preamble explicate distinguishing coordinates of reformed scriptural examination and hermeneutics, coordinates that define the way theology is practiced at the Reformed Theological University.

### **Preamble**

#### **Positioning**

The parties involved in the Reformed Theological University are aware of their unity through their faith in Jesus Christ, as God given Saviour and Redeemer of this world. We share the calling and desire to live in the service of the proclamation of the Gospel, to God’s glory and for the salvation of our fellow men. By the power of the Holy Spirit this Gospel remains a trustworthy and living Word of God, even in our day and age and in our society, also with our culture’s degree of secularisation. It is our joy, and we see it as our calling, to work on the progression of this Gospel by working together in a reformed university. We hope and pray that

this university will, under God's blessing, through its courses of study, its research and its knowledge dissemination, serve the churches and society, both in the Netherlands and abroad. The Reformed Theological University's academic practice goes hand in hand with a living profession of belief in the Church of ages. Historically and theologically the Reformed Theological University follows in the footsteps of the Reformation, the Further Reformation, the Secession and of Neo-Calvinism. Within the broad bedding of this reformed theology the Reformed Theological University seeks to research, further articulate and teach the importance and meaning of this reformed theology for our churches and for our society in this day and age.

### **Reformed tradition and the Holy Gospel**

The Reformed Theological University aims to be a place where the different reformed traditions, coming forth out of the Reformation, meet. Piety is experienced here and academics practiced out of a heartfelt consent for the reformed confessions concerning the Holy Gospel as expressed in articles 2 – 7 of the Nederlands Geloofsbelijdenis (Belgic Confession).

The Bible is the Word of God, written down by people as inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Bible testifies unto itself of its own authority. We accept the Scriptures before examining them and we let our questions not only be answered by the Bible, but also let them be corrected through it, in order to let it determine our thinking and our insights.

In communion with the Church of all times and places we confess the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as the life-giving Word in which God makes himself known. In all of their diversity, the books of the Old and the New Testament together, form a spiritual union in the Bible. The Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that the Scriptures were given by God to direct our faith to, to found our faith on and to confirm our faith by. We believe that God's Word is the truth and that we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are led by this truth.

For an understanding of the Scriptures a theologian needs a head and a heart. In order to discern the meaning of the Scriptures a theologian is reliant and dependant on the work of the Holy Spirit, the "first Author". Word and Spirit are inseparable.

### **The practicing of Reformed Theology**

Theology is, in faith, contemplating God as he has revealed himself. We practice this theology as an instrument in our praise of God. The Reformed Theological University and the associated church office studies, educate their students by teaching them to listen to the Scriptures. Herein also lies the prime task being the forming and equipping of future ministers of the Word. In researching and interpreting the Scriptures, reverence for the text, as the Word of the God who speaks, comes before traditional, cultural or personal preferences. This implies the wish to do right to the unique nature and style of the Bible text, in order to so completely respect the way of the Holy Spirit in putting the Word to writing.

Every Bible text is part of a larger whole: the Biblical message that is connected to and supported by salvation history, God's path with mankind and the world through creation, the fall, redemption and restoration. The salvation historical and eschatological perspective is essential for the reformed exegesis, as it provides insight into the unity of the Old and New Testament. Time and again, when interpreting the meaning of a text, both the direct and the broader context of the text are taken into consideration. The canon as a whole serves as a sounding board for the individual texts.

God, who has revealed himself in Christ, is also the creator of heaven and earth. Because of this we also incorporate the vision of the created reality, in which God's multicoloured wisdom is reflected, into our practice of theology and, where necessary and possible, try to find ways to discuss this with other academic fields. Theology as a contemplation of God, His creation and the meaning of the redemption in Jesus, chooses not for isolation but rather for its place amongst other academic fields. The Reformed Theological University wishes to serve the church and society together with Christian academics working in other academic fields. In this, God's revelation, through his path with Israel and in the coming and work of Christ, is for us the exploratory and innovative perspective in which we see reality and the standard for the truth.

We bring ourselves along when we read the Scriptures, with our own way of thinking and our own presumptions, within the reality in which God has placed us. We cannot simply take ourselves out of the equation. The message of the Scriptures seeks to land specifically in the reality of our lives, including our culture, but can, more than once, also have a critical effect on it. In every time and place disciples of Christ may retrieve old and new things from the treasury of the Scriptures. (Matt. 13:52) The Scripture itself always has the last word in this, and not our traditional and cultural preferences or moral intuitions. The pointing out of God's lasting regulations for our lives requires, also in our culture, scripturally secured wisdom and sensitivity.

### **Meaning for our time and society**

Because we receive the Gospel in the context in which we live, we practice a Reformed theology that enters into conversation with, and is fruitful for, our time, culture and society. A Reformed theologian turns to the Scriptures with questions from various domains: faith, ethics, society and science. In his quest for answers he will endeavour to understand the Scriptures as well as possible in order to interpret them as purely as possible. In this, decisions made will not always be the same for all parts of every reformed tradition. Even in a framework that is based on a heartfelt adherence to the Scriptures and our confessions, our explanations and understanding of the Scriptures when dealing with modern day questions will weigh text evidence differently, inevitably causing tension. In the realisation that our understanding will always be incomplete and that our academic knowledge is limited and temporary in character, theologians should always be transparent in their research questions and methods, and must always be willing to give accountability. In this way the mutual understanding is served and furthered.

The understanding and interpretation of the Scripture can present us with many questions to which there are not always uniform answers. It is therefore all the more important to engage in a mutual and precise manner of listening to the Scripture itself, in the realisation that we are dependent on the Holy Spirit. This prime task given by the Scripture to the practice of theology ensures that the Bible does not become a "paper pope". Sola scriptura is directly connected to solus Christus. Christ is the heart of the Scripture, it revolves around him. Reformed theology listens to the scriptures through Christ and to Christ. Thus, again and again, it presents, and answers, questions in every age and in varying contexts.

## **Mission and profile**

The Reformed Theological University is aware of its calling with regards to the preservation, thinking through and further expansion of the heritage of reformed theological practice in the today's world. We wish to effectuate this mission by giving the input of both orthodox and neo-Calvinistic spirituality their full share and where possible bring them together in the practice of theology. The core value is "learning by meeting one another". In this, pietas et scientas, are ever closely connected. Continuing in this line the mission and profile of the Reformed Theological University can be worded as follows, whereby the Preamble is presumed to be its base.

### **Mission**

The Reformed Theological University endeavours to be a home base for reformed theology in the Netherlands, a recognisable address for church and society. The spiritual forming and the academic and practical enablement of theologians, both future ministers of the Word and those who will serve God's church and Kingdom in other ways, are given a high priority.

Starting from various church backgrounds, the Reformed Theological University endeavours to be a meeting place for those who wish to reflect on theology, academics, church and the Christian presence in today's society, in line with the reformed tradition. To enable this, cooperation is sought with like-minded institutions, both foreign and domestic. The Reformed Theological University wishes to be an inspiring university for students and employees, a university that motivates the practice of theology at an academic level, in a context of spiritual forming and enablement. To make this possible the university offers various (part-time) studies: Bachelor of Theology, a Master of Theology (general), among others a Master of intercultural reformed theology, and a research Master. Besides this the Reformed Theological University is also home to a Master of Divinity for the education of pastors for the CGK, the GKv and the NGK. As comprehensive reformed theological university the Reformed Theological University guarantees good education and innovative research of the highest quality. The university develops activities in the field of knowledge valorisation for a wide audience in both church and society. Besides this the Reformed Theological University desires to be of meaning to Christians employed in other academic fields.

### **Profile**

The basis of the Reformed Theological University lies in the desire to strengthen the practice of Reformed theology with the intent of building the churches with which we are connected, both in the Netherlands and abroad. While praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and drawing from the source of the living Word of God, confessional academics dedicate themselves to the spreading of the Gospel, in a desire to make a contribution to all the work required in the Kingdom of God. Piety and academics, doctrine and life, study and church are all entwined. The practice of theology at the Reformed Theological University is rooted in the confessions of the Church of Ages and in Reformed Theology, as developed since the Reformation. With respect for every person's uniqueness and input the Reformed Theological University seeks the to make the practice of reformed theology, in its full breadth and colour, fruitful for today's church and society.

## APPENDIX L

### The Theological University in Kampen (TUK) and Reformed Hermeneutics Today

An official publication of the TUK explains how Reformed hermeneutics should function in our time and culture. Thirteen essays by faculty members of TUK comprise the volume: *Gereformeerde ethiek vandaag* (2017).<sup>15</sup> The TUK will host a conference on this publication on September 29, 2017.

A brief consideration of an important essay in this latest publication is important for trying to understand recent synod decisions concerning admitting women to office and probably also the decision that is still forthcoming on admitting practicing homosexuals to the Lord's Table. It is beyond the scope of this brief report to go into all the essays of this collection of essays. That would require another book. For our purpose, we focus on the contribution of Prof. De Bruijne who teaches ethics.

#### Ethics and Hermeneutics

In Ad de Bruijne's contribution, "Ethiek en hermenutiek" he asserts that we need a better vision than simply basing our ethics on the Ten Commandments (182).<sup>16</sup> The central ethical hermeneutical question is: "what is the good life that fits with God's work in Christ on the way to the coming kingdom and *what is within the margins of the given situation the best way forward in that direction?*" (184-85, italics in original text). The primary answer centres on the threesome: faith, hope and love in which love forms the centre" (185).

De Bruijne goes on to claim that the ethics of the apostles was contextualized for their situation. We also need to attune to the culture of our day as the apostles did. They gave different advices depending on the situation (188-89). When it comes to today: "Factors such as experience, reason, fellowship and context remain standing within the framework of the encompassing narrative of Scripture. Therewith they are hallowed ("geheiligd") and they can fully participate within the ethical hermeneutic" (190).

De Bruijne details five consequences in light of the above.

Firstly, "Ethical hermeneutic needs to interpret explicitly the reality in which we seek the good life. After all, the reality was included in the grand narrative of Scripture. Reality is not just a passive field into which we can apply biblical norms. Also according to Article 2 of the Belgic Confession reality forms part of God's revelation. Reality can teach us much, as is evident in the biblical wisdom literature" (190-91). De Bruijne then paints with a very large brush as to what is all included in the reality that helps us to make ethical decisions. This reality includes films and other cultural phenomena evident in our western, Christian influenced culture (191).

Secondly, also self-understanding and self-critique belong to ethical hermeneutics. If you judge someone else, you judge yourself (Rom 2:1). Rational arguments are not enough. Love should be served, for example, also over against homosexuals.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ad de Bruijne and Hans Burger, eds., *Gereformeerde hermeneutiek vandaag: theologische perspectieven*. TU-bezinningsreeks nr. 18 (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Some of the same themes are found in Ad L. Th. De Bruijne, "Christian Ethics and God's use of the Bible" in *Correctly Handling the Word of Truth*. Edited by M. te Velde and Gerhard H. Visscher (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014) 171-186.

Thirdly, De Bruijne notes that his approach to ethics through the hermeneutic of the apostles has consequences and gives correctives and supplements to common Reformed use of the Bible in ethics. We must reckon with [verrekenen] the contingent character of many ethical directives in the Bible. They do not stand apart from their own time and situation to which they are in the first place directed.

For instance, the Bible only says of homosexuality what was important in those days. The question that weighs the most heavily on us does not occur in the Bible, namely, that an upright Christian discovers that he has an involuntary homosexual orientation. Therefore, what the apostles say about that topic is not automatically a sufficient answer to the questions. The apostolic guidelines were first directed to fellow Christians in the days of the apostles and do not automatically give direct guidelines to us. Rather they stimulate us to answer such ethical questions in our circumstances (192).

Fourthly, more than is customary in Reformed ethics, we need to ask attention for spiritual ability for mature (independent) and creative ethical judgments (Rom 12:1-2). The Bible indicates this with terms such as the ability to discern, wisdom, and sensitivity. The congregation has that ability. As those redeemed by Christ and recreated by the Spirit we have the ability to discern good and evil. Such an ability is presupposed in the Sermon on the Mount.

Fifthly, in light of the above, ethical hermeneutics has an emphatic spiritual dimension. A methodical approach will not get you results. Every positive outcome is a gift. Insights take you by surprise, also when you work hard at it. You get insights given to you both directly and indirectly by others. You listen and read, become educated, observe and move in a tradition. This typifies insight into God's Word and will (194).

The biblical phenomenon of prophecy teaches us that such knowledge ultimately comes from either God or a wandering spirit. Knowledge of good and evil is a gift of grace. Wisdom is given in answer to prayer (James 1:5). De Bruijne then references Acts 21:10-14 to show that prophecy was used to indicate God's will in a concrete situation. He claims that prophecy belongs with ethical hermeneutics. Christian ethical insight is impossible if we do not with the deed give ourselves over to the guidance of the Spirit. Without this attitude, Christian ethics becomes secularized, even if it justifies with an appeal to Scripture and reasons from biblical data (194).

This gift character of ethical insight teaches us to respect God's freedom if his Word does not give a clear answer. And if ethical insights appear from unexpected places we should value and use them.

The gift character of ethical insight makes us both bold [vrijmoedig] and humble. You do not use a gift with all kinds of qualifications and disclaimers, but you use them enthusiastically and with conviction. At the same time you fully realize that you only have what you have received (1 Cor 4:7) and that also "ethical bread" only comes on a "daily" basis. You cannot rely with confidence today on the gift of yesterday and you do not yet have the gift for tomorrow. Besides, mistakes are possible and fellow Christians may have better insights. Even the church as a whole has regularly erred in discerning God's will (slavery, place of women) (195).

De Bruijne continues by saying that our ethical surety is the surety of faith. In faith you dare to take the step. Precisely this attitude makes you stand open for God's eventual correction and further guidance. You must be open to revising earlier conclusions.

The gift character of ethical insight therefore motivates being receptive before God. Only the spiritual person can understand (1 Cor 2:14-15). We are only open to God if we are formed by the Spirit and participate in Christ's traits. It is not only so that ethical insights can change how we live our life, but the

reverse is also true. We receive deeper insight when we really conform to the image of Christ. First comes love. From this is born discernment (Phil 1:9-10). Therefore the most important function of the Bible is not even that it shows us precisely the way to go. Scripture binds us to Christ and makes us participate in his all-round spiritual ability to recognize the good life. Ethical hermeneutics is only possible when Scripture constantly instils in us a collective and personal liturgy. Only in such a spiritual environment do fruitful ethical insights originate. Sometimes we receive an ethical insight while we are dealing with a biblical passage that has nothing to do with the subject of the insight. But that biblical passage does bind us to Christ and forms a window on the encompassing framework of God's works. Therefore, no ethicist can do without an intensive interaction with the Bible (195).

De Bruijne then pleads for a more expansive Reformed view of hermeneutics in ethics. He asks: Are the Reformed confessions correct in stating that "Holy Scripture fully contains the will of God and that all that man must believe in order to be saved is sufficiently taught therein" (BC Art 7)? When that is meant to say that all the necessary ethical insight are found somewhere in the Bible or can be derived from the Bible, then that is not true. However, if we see the Bible as a witness of God's work in Christ and as the means whereby the Holy Spirit makes us partake in Christ, then the picture changes. All factors of Christian ethical hermeneutics are indeed in Scripture. Seen this way, Christian ethical hermeneutics remains indeed hermeneutics of the Bible (195).

### **Brief Critique**

In general, one can conclude that this essay does not promote confidence in the ability of the Word of God to address the ethical issues of the day.

Ad de Bruijne suggests that the Bible is not enough for determining ethical decisions. He denies that all the necessary ethical insight can be found somewhere in the Bible or can be derived from the Bible. According to him, since the ethics of the apostles was contextualized for their situation, we also need to attune to the culture of our day and give different advices depending on the situation. De Bruijne overlooks the fact that the apostles were inspired when writing Scripture. We are not.

In response to De Bruijne's essay, the following can briefly be noted using the above numbering.

First, De Bruijne suggests that general revelation in which he includes culture can be a help for us in making ethical decisions. This notion is not biblical and our critique of it can be found in our report to the 2013 Synod held in Carman (pp. 66-68). It can also be noted that the good in our present culture is often due to Christian influences on the Western world. These influences in turn came from Scripture. So we need to go back to Scripture for our ethical bearings.

Second, it is true that rational arguments are not enough in making ethical decisions. Love should also be included. However, we must be careful not to create false dilemmas as if rationally using the Ten Commandments and its principles cannot and should not use love in administering the divine norms.

Third, when De Bruijne states that we must reckon with the contingent character of many ethical directives in the Bible and that they do not stand apart from their own time and situation to which they are in the first place directed, he is in danger of undermining the clear norms of Scripture. This is clearly evident in the toleration of practising homosexuals because they live together in love and faithfulness. God revealed his abhorrence of homosexual behaviour throughout Scripture and through all kinds of cultures (e.g., Lev 18:22; Rom 1:26-28; 1 Cor 6:9-10). Love is served if God's enduring norms are made clear to those trapped in homosexual sin.

Fourth, when De Bruijne says that we need more attention for spiritual ability and creative ethical judgments than is customary in Reformed ethics, is he suggesting that we go beyond what Scripture teaches? He says that Christ assumed such an ability in the Sermon on the Mount. But Did Christ really expect those who heard his sermon to go beyond Scripture? Christ even said that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. He reaffirmed the ongoing normativity of the commandments (Matt 5:17-20). We need to act according to the law, not go beyond it.

Fifth, when De Bruijne emphasizes the spiritual dimension in ethical judgments, he correctly emphasizes that we need to interact with the Word of God. However, by suggesting that prophecy belongs with ethical hermeneutics, he opens the door to ethical judgments that could contradict the clear text of Scripture. We have no promise from God that he will give us prophecies from time to time in order to give us ethical direction. He guides us by his Word and Spirit (Heid Cat, LD 12).

In conclusion, De Bruijne is incorrect to conclude that all the necessary ethical insight cannot be found in the Bible or derived from it (195). Scripture contains everything we need to know. The Ten Commandments give us the basic divine norms from which we can derive the necessary ethical principles. Also, “we must agree, based on the apostolic appeal to the law in Romans 13:8-14, James 1:22-2:13, and 1 John 3, that the apostles most certainly assumed and taught the authority of the Ten Commandments and expected Christians to put them into practice.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, contrary to De Bruijne’s view on an example he uses that we have no guidance from Scripture on environmental issues, the principle of stewardship and care for creation so clearly articulated in Scripture is a basic and sufficient guide to navigate the ethical waters of caring for God’s creation (e.g., Gen 2:15; Ps 24:1; 95:5; 145:9; Prov 12:10; 1 Pet 4:10). All other ethical areas can likewise be guided by God’s Word if we recognize the principles that the Word teaches us.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Theodore G. Van Raalte, “Christian Ethics and God’s Use of the Bible” in in *Correctly Handling the Word of Truth*. Edited by M. te Velde and Gerhard H. Visscher (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 191.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. “Must We Go ‘Beyond’ the Bible?: The Theological Use of the Bible.” in *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. Edited by Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 82-93.

## APPENDIX M

Dr. J.M. Burger  
 c/o Theologische Universiteit  
 Broederweg 15  
 8261 GS Kampen  
 The Netherlands

19 July 2016

Dear brother Burger,

This letter comes to you from a synodical committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches which has submitted a report to Synod Dunnville 2016. In this report, we evaluated developments within our Dutch sister churches (GKv). Among other things we critiqued your essay, "Voorbij de offerkritiek" which was published in *Cruciaal: de verrassende betekenis van Jezus' kruisiging* (2014). Please find this part of our report attached to this letter.

In response to this critique, a church submitted a letter to General Synod Dunnville claiming that this committee misrepresented your views. Synod therefore considered that "it would be important for the SRN [our committee] to further investigate these concerns." We were mandated "to continue to observe developments at the Theological University of the GKN in Kampen (TUK), this includes paying attention to the article by the Rev. Dr. Burger."

In the light of the above, we would like to ask you the following:

1. Did we misrepresent you in our critique of your article in *Cruciaal*? If so, could you point out where?
2. Have you since revised your views and publicly withdrawn your contested views as published in *Cruciaal*?

We very much want to fair to you as a brother in the Lord. Up to this point we are not convinced that we have wronged you. What you publicly wrote, we took the liberty to critique. It also struck us that the letter sent to Synod criticising our analysis of your writing did not indicate or show how we had misrepresented your position as given in your *Cruciaal* article.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With brotherly greetings

For the Subcommittee for Relations with the churches in the Netherlands



Gerard J. Nordeman, secretary

Cc: SRN Members Rev. J. De Gelder, Rev. J. Moesker, Dr. C. Van Dam

Excerpt from the CRCA-SRN report to synod Dunnville 2016

### 3. Hans Burger and Christ's Sacrifice

Dr. Hans Burger, appointed by Synod Ede as university docent in Systematic Theology, recently published an essay “Voorbij de offerkritiek” [Beyond Critiquing the Offering] with subtitle, “Het beeld van het offer” [“The Image of Sacrifice”].<sup>19</sup> He notes that today words like sacrifice, scapegoat, and sin offering tend to have a negative connotation. How then can we speak of Christ's sacrifice as something positive when the word sacrifice has such a negative connotation in our culture for someone who has not grown up in the Christian faith (52)? What follows in Burger's writing is quite confusing. It appears that Burger wants to express the gospel in such a way that it is more understandable and acceptable to our current postmodern culture by downplaying the element of sacrifice. He unjustly suggests that the Bible is also critical of sacrifice (53) and questions dogmatic formulations of Christ's sacrifice. He writes that it is important to distinguish Scripture's speaking of Jesus's death as a sacrifice “from dogmatic articulations such as ‘Jesus brings a sacrifice by bearing our punishment in our place as payment for our guilt. In this way he gives the required satisfaction to God and acquires our salvation.’ This train of thought you do not find in this way in the New Testament” (53-54). This is an incredible statement since the Scriptures clearly teach all these truths.<sup>20</sup> With this statement he appears to deny the substitutionary atonement of Christ. Indeed, he states that Jesus's death was not a sacrifice strictly speaking. But, on the other hand he acknowledged that he is the lamb that takes away the sins of the world and that his blood brings peace (54-55). Nevertheless, Burger considers the biblical concept of the substitutionary atonement as a medieval understanding of Christ's death which suited their cultural context.

Our current culture is not so receptive to this notion and so Burger looks for a more culturally acceptable understanding of what Scripture says concerning Christ's sacrifice. He opines that the sacrifice of Christ consisted in Christ's complete dedication in obeying his Father in order to fulfill his mission. In this way Christ makes us people who like him are dedicated to God. The cultic image of sacrifice emphasizes the positive of Jesus who in his dedication covers our sins and changes us to people dedicated to God. In this way our whole life becomes a sacrifice. With this type of reasoning Burger downplays, ignores, or even denies the importance of Christ's paying for our sins with his bloody sacrifice in order to satisfy God's justice as confessed, for example, in the Heidelberg Catechism (LD 3 to 6). Indeed, he comes close to making a caricature of God as unfair to demand sacrifice. After mentioning how God stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son, Burger writes: “The Bible does not therefore picture a strict God who wants to see blood. As if God wants to see people die, no matter what the cost. As if he is a Father who is so bloodthirsty that he just goes ahead and sacrifices his own Son: a miserable, immoral God.”<sup>21</sup> But Burger glosses over the fact that God is holy and that his justice must be satisfied. Burger continues by speaking of God's love, but says very little of God's justice. Apparently in Burger's opinion, such would not be appealing or understandable to our current culture. For Burger, God's sacrifice in Christ is “primarily an appeal to our heart. It is a loving invitation not to continue to reject God's love but to answer it. . . . Connected immediately with the death of Jesus as sacrifice is the appeal that we give our life as thank and praise offering with full admiration for God” (65). “So Christ's sacrifice is the secret of our life dedication.”

While it is biblical to speak of God's love in connection with Christ's sacrifice (e.g. John 3:16), one also needs to underline the importance of God's justice and the principle of the necessity of blood atonement

---

<sup>19</sup>. Hans Burger, “Voorbij Het Offerkritiek (Het Beeld Van Het Offer),” in *Cruciaal: De Verrassende Betekenis Van Jezus' Kruisiging*, Henk Bakker and et al. (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 2014), 51–65.

<sup>20</sup>. With respect to Christ's sacrifice in our place: Rom 5:8; 6:4-5; 2 Cor 5:21; as bearing our punishment: Isa 53; 1 Pet 2:24; Heb 9:28; as payment for our guilt: Matt 20:28; 1 Tim 2:6; 1 Pet 1:18-19.

<sup>21</sup>. Burger, “Voorbij Het Offerkritiek,” 64. The original reads: “De Bijbel tekent dus geen strenge God die bloed wil zien. Alsof God wil dat er koste wat kost doden vallen. Alsof hij een Vader is die zo bloeddorstig is dat hij dan maar zijn eigen Zoon slachtoffer: een nare, immorele God.”

(cf. Lev. 17:11). By neglecting penal substitution, Burger seems to be articulating a neo-orthodox view of the atonement. Similar to Burger, neo-orthodoxy teaches that salvation should not be seen in the forensic context of the courtroom, “whereby Christ, by his substitutionary action obtains a benefit that is then passed on to others. Rather, salvation is to be found in the very being of Christ, and therefore union with Christ becomes the key doctrine.” United to Christ, we share in his reconciled humanity and so receive God’s blessings.<sup>22</sup>

In sum, in trying to be more culturally relevant or understandable, Burger’s essay raises the question whether he still upholds the full biblical teaching of substitutionary atonement. Unfortunately, his views do little to encourage trust in the TUK among the supporting and sister churches.<sup>23</sup>

|

---

<sup>22</sup>. A. T. B. McGowan, “The Atonement as Penal Substitution,” in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*, ed. A. T. B. McGowan (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 197; see also pp. 194, 197-200..

<sup>23</sup>. The above is sufficient for our purpose, but much more could be said about Burger’s essay. See, e.g., the discussions in Rev. D. de Jong’s blog: <http://www.bijbelknopendoos.nl/kn24.htm>; <http://www.eeninwaarheid.info/>; and the review of *Cruciaal* by J. Douma: <http://www.jochemdouma.nl/boekbespreking/>.

## APPENDIX N

Dr. J.M. Burger  
Hondsdrif 4  
8265 DZ Kampen  
The Netherlands

CRCA Subcommittee for Relations with the churches in the Netherlands  
Gerard J. Nordeman, secretary

2 March 2017

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

Thank you for the letter of your CanRC Subcommittee for Relations with the churches in the Netherlands. This offers me the opportunity to clarify my convictions and my position concerning the doctrine of atonement. Having read the excerpt of your report to synod Dunnville 2016, I think that some things would benefit from further clarification. Unfortunately, it would seem to me that some passages in my article have been misunderstood. I really hope that this exchange leads to more understanding, as a gift of God's Spirit.

Let me make three preliminary remarks.

First, I do not deny the doctrine of penal substitution. I do affirm and believe that our Lord Jesus Christ in our stead bore the punishment that we deserved for our sin (cf. Is 53:5); he was cursed in our stead and to redeem us from the curse of the law (cf. Gal 3:13). Nowhere in my writings have I denied this and I cannot imagine that I would deny this, for Scripture teaches it clearly. In the appendix to this letter you find my other relevant publications.

Second, in my attempts to understand the atonement, I want to do justice to the manifold way in which the Scriptures teach us about the significance of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Images from different areas of life are used to show this significance, like the temple, the court, the battle field, and the slave market. This is a reason to examine the doctrinal tradition in light of Scripture, and ask whether this tradition really speaks in accordance with Scripture. In the dogmatic tradition, we often find that images from different contexts are used to interpret each other, like this:

Sacrifice (cultic) = substitutionary bearing of punishment (juridical) = gift of satisfaction (juridical)  
= payment of guilt (juridical; originally slave market) = acquisition of (benefits of) salvation

What I am investigating is whether these equations are helpful to understand the different passages of Scripture. My aim is only to test the tradition of dogmatic discourse against the touchstone of Scripture.

Third, in my article in *Crucial* I have focussed on the cultic image of sacrifice, without interpreting it too quickly in juridical terms. Thus, it would not be correct to equate my article with a complete doctrine of atonement. The article concerns only the image of sacrifice. It states that we cannot understand the image of sacrifice completely without the use of other images. I affirm the

importance of the juridical images. As I wrote, the cultic images need other images and especially the juridical to explain their meaning (see p. 56, p. 59). But the aim of the article, however, is to focus as much as possible on the image of sacrifice. At the same time as the publication of *Cruciaal*, I wrote an article concerning forensic images (see Hans Burger, “‘Door zijn striemen bent u genezen’: een uitweg uit de verstaanscrisis’, in *Theologia Reformata* 57 (2014) 4, 388-395). To understand my position, both articles have to be read together. Without God’s justice (which is not the topic of my article), the Gospel would be no gospel. We need the gospel of God’s righteousness. It is not because I myself could not have done so that we asked Maarten Wisse to write the article about punishment and judgement. Of course, I could have written both articles in *Cruciaal*, concerning the cultic world and concerning the juridical world of the court. In that case, it is most likely that I would not have needed to have written this letter.

After these preliminary remarks, I would like to deal with several themes.

### 1. The role of culture and context

In theology, it is important to be aware of one’s context and of the questions that theological themes evoke. However, cultural relevance and contextual plausibility are no criterion for truth. It would be wrong to ‘express the gospel in such a way that it is more understandable and acceptable to our current postmodern culture by downplaying the element of sacrifice’.

This is not what I was seeking to do. In the article, I stated that for many today the idea of sacrifice is hard to understand. But what I was seeking to do, is answer the question ‘what did the authors of the New Testament want to say, when they wrote that Jesus’ death was a sacrifice (p. 55)?’

I am not looking for ‘a more culturally acceptable understanding of what Scripture says concerning Christ’s sacrifice.’ What I do wish to achieve is to make clear to 21<sup>st</sup> century people what the Bible teaches about sacrifice. And trying to be understandable is a virtue worth strive for for all who are guided by the Spirit of Pentecost.

### 2. Criticism of sacrifices

In my article, I dealt with several criticisms of sacrifice. I did not differentiate between them, and it may seem now that I regarded them all as one. Of course, we need to distinguish feminist or nihilist criticism of sacrifices from Biblical or prophetic criticism. I do maintain that passages like Hebrews 9:9.12.25-26 and 10:1-4 are critical of sacrifices. Only the sacrifice of Christ is effective. Hebrews is quite critical of Old Testament sacrifices. This criticism can be easily combined with the conviction that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of Old Testament sacrifices.

### 3. Difference between Biblical theology and systematic theology

In my article, I signalled the difference between the New Testament and Systematic Theology, and I answered the question: what should a Biblical understanding of sacrifice look like? Does Scripture itself give us an interpretation of the meaning of sacrifice?

In my article, I wrote that in Scripture we do not find statements like ‘Jesus brings a sacrifice by substitutionary bearing our punishment as payment of our debt. In this way, he give the required satisfaction to God and acquires our salvation’ (p. 54). We do find in Scripture that Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice; that our punishment was on him; that he payed the price to buy us. But the combination of

these elements in one systematic theological statement, is post-biblical in the sense that it moves beyond the words of Scripture into the field of systematic theological reflection. That does not mean that systematic theological reflection is prone to error, but it is still important to signal the fact that it is the Bible that is always authoritative, not systematic reflection.

And as I already wrote, I do not deny the substitutionary atonement of Christ. I do not know how I could do so. What only matters is that Scripture teaches this.

Third, I had good reasons to signal the difference between a sacrifice according to the Mosaic Law and the sacrifice of Jesus. It takes some steps to understand Jesus' death as a sacrifice. No clean Levite priest played a role in Jesus' death, but unclean Roman soldiers executed him. Jesus did not die in the temple and near the altar, but outside the city. The context of his death was not clean and holy; on the contrary, he died the unclean, unholy death of a cursed one (p. 54). Moreover, the Mosaic law forbids sacrifice of human beings. Nevertheless, the New Testament teaches that Jesus' death was a sacrifice. In my article I wanted to answer the question: why does the New Testament teach that Jesus' death was a sacrifice?

#### 4. Our theological heritage

The report states 'Burger considers the biblical concept of the substitutionary atonement as a medieval understanding of Christ's death which suited their cultural context.'

My response to this statement would begin with the observation that a Biblical concept never can be medieval. Secondly, I wish to signal the difference between the language of the New Testament and later dogmatic formulations. For example, one will not find the word 'satisfaction' within Scripture. One does see the combination of Biblical elements in, for example, Anselm's doctrine of satisfaction and its reception by the Reformers as a reaction to problems created by the sacrament of penance.

Consideration like this lead to the following equations:

Sacrifice (cultic) = substitutionary bearing of punishment (juridical) = gift of satisfaction (juridical)  
= payment of guilt (juridical; originally slave market) = acquisition of (benefits of) salvation

This doctrine of satisfaction makes it possible to say: "when coming to the priest in the sacrament of penance, a believer does not depend on his good works for his satisfaction. He depends on Christ's death." That is good theology: for the people who had to do penance and were insecure about their salvation, it was good news.

#### 5. Sacrifice

Concerning my view of sacrifice, the report states: 'With this type of reasoning Burger downplays, ignores, or even denies the importance of Christ's paying for our sins with his bloody sacrifice in order to satisfy God's justice as confessed, for example, in the Heidelberg Catechism (LD 3 to 6).'

I would like to offer some remarks in reaction to this passage.

First, the article did not deny importance of Christ dying for our sins, paying the ransom to make us free, bearing our punishment, being cursed to save us from the curse, giving his blood for our atonement. Scripture teaches it. What I did in the article is to explain how we have to understand the sacrifice of Christ. The article was too short to explain completely how all these elements are combined into a systematic doctrine of atonement. Still, I did refer to many of them.

Second, the following understanding of sacrifice was suggested in the article:

Sacrifice = complete dedication to God = our dedication to God.

In line with the article this can be explained as the following:

Sacrifice = complete dedication to God (including the bearing of our guilt in accordance with God's will, the undergoing of our judgment) = our dedication to God = our sins are done away = we are bought free

## 6. Image of God

It is important that a doctrine of atonement does not suggest a wrong image of God. Our theology should not stimulate caricatures of God. Consequently, I regret that to the authors of the report interpreted the argument in my article as in any way misrepresenting our holy God.

God is good and fair – so how we speak about the atonement should fit with a Biblical image of God. This is the reason why I warned on p. 64 against defending the doctrine of atonement by using unbiblical caricatures of God. The aim of the article is similar to that of Herman Bavinck when he writes in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3 p. 395 (in the original Dutch p. 384):

'The satisfactory nature of Christ's obedience, accordingly, does not consist in that Christ by his blood satisfied a vengeful deity and stilled his hatred and spite by a quantity of suffering'.

To see God as a vengeful deity, filled with hatred is wrong. Accordingly, it is in Bavinck's view, wrong to suggest in one's doctrine of atonement that God is like this. But for Bavinck as well as for me, it remains true that God's will includes Christ's death on the cross.

## 7. Gods wrath and holiness and penal substitution

I also want to make some remarks on God's wrath and holiness, and on penal substitution. God is holy and his justice must be satisfied. Therefore, I affirm the doctrine of penal substitution.

First, my article does not deal with the satisfaction of God's justice. It is about sacrifice, but not about the courtroom; not about punishment; not about judgment. I have written about the courtroom, about punishment, about judgment elsewhere, and we need these concepts in theology. Salvation should also be seen in the forensic context of the courtroom. If Scripture teaches that salvation should be seen in the forensic context of the courtroom (and Scripture does so), then we have to teach accordingly. We do not just need the context of the temple, we also need all these different contexts that the New Testament refers to: the courtroom, the temple the slavery market, , and the battle field.

Second, why did I stress that Jesus gives us perfect holiness? Because God is holy and as sinners we are not worthy to stand in God's presence. Moreover, because God is righteous, the article stated on p. 64: 'Daarin doet hij het schier onmogelijke: eerlijk zijn, trouw zijn aan slachtoffers van onrecht, het kwade straffen, misdadigers opruimen (de oude mens sterft), vrede en recht brengen, zonder dat er een lege aarde overblijft. Want als God vrede op aarde brengt en het kwaad opruimt, wie zou er dan overblijven?' This sentence includes the satisfaction of God's righteousness! Without the satisfaction of God's righteousness, the coming of God would result in an empty earth. No human being would survive God's presence, apart from Jesus Christ.

In your letter, you asked me whether I have revised my views or publicly withdrawn what I have as published in *Cruciaal*?

I have tried to clarify my position and answer critical questions several times, but this is all in Dutch. Below you find an overview of all my publications on the doctrine of atonement after *Cruciaal*. Until today, I have received the impression that my clarifications were convincing for members of the GKv, or at least satisfactory. No one has told me that I should withdraw or revise something, and more specifically, what it is that should be withdrawn and why. Consequently, the views expressed in the article were not revised, nor was anything withdrawn from the article in *Cruciaal*. Of course, it is possible that one may have my blind spots. You may be assured that I, too, would withdraw any views which may be shown to be erroneous.

I hope that this letter gives a satisfactory answer to your letter. If further clarification is needed, I am willing to give this.

Again, I am thankful for the opportunity that you gave me by writing me your letter. I hope and pray that God will give us a renewed, shared understanding of the meaning of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ at the cross. Here beats the heart of our Christian faith, here for all of us lies the source of our new life with God.

With brotherly greetings, in Christ our Lord,



Hans Burger

### Appendix – some literature

Hans Burger, *Being in Christ. A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective*, Wipf and Stock Eugene Oregon 2008.

Hans Burger, “Door zijn striemen bent u genezen”: een uitweg uit de verstaanscrisis’, in *Theologia Reformata* 57 (2014) 4, 388-395.

Reaction on the website ‘een in waarheid’, ‘Cruciale kritiek 1’  
<http://eeninwaarheid.info/index.php?rub=10&item=1102&zoekterm=hans%20burger> .

Second reaction on the website ‘een in waarheid’, ‘Cruciale kritiek 3’  
<http://eeninwaarheid.info/index.php?rub=10&item=1129&zoekterm=cruciale%20kritiek> .

Hans Burger, ‘Waarom moest Jezus sterven? (2) Discussie over het offer van Christus – antwoord aan Bas Luiten’, in *Onderweg* 2 (2016) 6, 16-19.

Hans Burger, ‘Wil God bloed zien om iets te vergeven?’, in *Ambtelijk contact* 55 (2016) 3, 10-13.

Hans Burger, ‘Tussen atomisering en samenklontering: Op zoek naar Bijbels-theologische samenhang van beelden voor verzoening’, in Arnold Huijgen, Eric Peels en Cees-Jan Smits (red), *Schuld en vrijheid: Opstellen aangeboden aan prof. dr. G.C. den Hertog*, Boekencentrum Zoetermeer 2017, 61-79.

## APPENDIX O

13 March, 2017

Dear Br. Burger

Thank you very much for your response to our questions regarding subject article.

We as committee have read it carefully and have a better understanding of your reasoning behind the article.

However we are not fully convinced that we were wrong in our critique as expressed to you.

We have detailed our observations in attached letter.

Again, we wish to express our appreciation for your having taken the time to try to take away any misunderstanding.

We look forward to perhaps meeting with you on April 5 in Kampen, D.V.

On behalf of the CRCA-SRN

Gerard J. Nordeman

Secretary

Dear brother Burger,

Thank you for your response of March 2, 2017 to our letter of July 12, 2016. We are happy to note that you do not deny the doctrine of penal substitution. We gladly accept your assurances in this regard. We will come back to this point later in our response.

We had posed two questions to you. We will consider your response of March 2, 2017 in light of these two questions.

**Our first question** to you in our letter of July 12, 2016 was “Did we misrepresent you in our critique of your article in *Cruciaal*? If so, could you point out where.” (We do not react to your other writings which you have sent us since we had not read them and they were not part of our report.)

In our critique, we had mentioned: “It appears that Burger wants to express the gospel in such a way that it is more understandable and acceptable to our current postmodern culture by downplaying the element of sacrifice.”

In your response you stated that “it would be wrong” to do this. Rather, you said: “What I do wish to achieve is to make clear to 21<sup>st</sup> century people what the Bible teaches about sacrifice.” However, in attempting to do this, we are of the opinion that you do not do justice to the biblical teaching on sacrifice. In your response to our concerns,

you first say that “I have focussed on the cultic image of sacrifice, without interpreting it too quickly in juridical terms.”

Secondly, you suggest that the Bible is critical of sacrifice and

thirdly, you signal “the difference between a sacrifice according to the Mosaic Law and the sacrifice of Jesus.” Let us briefly consider each of these in turn.

On the **first point**, can you really separate the “cultic image of sacrifice” from the juridical meaning underlying sacrifice? Sacrifice would not be part of the “cult” if it was not for God’s just demands for blood. The whole biblical rationale for the Mosaic sacrificial system was juridically anchored. Blood had to be shed because God demanded the life blood of man according to his divine justice. As Hebrews 9:22 summarized: “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (cf. Lev 17:11). Instead of demanding man’s own life and blood, God, knowing that man would not be able to bear his eternal wrath, graciously provided a provisional substitute life and blood by way of animal sacrifice in anticipation of the coming Savior (cf. Rom 3:25). Man had sinned, but animal blood was sacrificed. In speaking of sacrifice in a biblical manner, one cannot speak of it in isolation from its juridical significance.

You also mention: “We do find in Scripture that Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice; that our punishment was on him; that he paid the price to buy us. But the combination of these elements in one systematic theological statement, is post-biblical in the sense that it moves beyond the words of Scripture into the field of systematic theological reflection.” In our view, our original report on this issue stands and you are creating a false dilemma. If Scripture is crystal clear on the truths we confess, how can you justify the expectation that the Author of Scripture should summarize all the different elements regarding Christ’s work in one theological statement? Furthermore, your words could be interpreted as intimating that Scripture does not have theological statements or theological reflection. We should avoid muddying the waters with false dilemmas.

On the **second point**, it is not correct to say that the Bible is critical of sacrifices. The sacrifices were a means whereby the LORD graciously showed the gospel of the coming Christ. More about that in the third point. You refer to Hebrews 9:9, 12, 25-26 and Hebrews 10:1-4 as being critical of sacrifice. But the term “critical” is not correct here. These passages show the limitations of the Old Testament sacrificial service because they were shadows of better things to come, as God intended. They were divinely ordained. To criticize them is to criticize God’s good provision for his Old Testament people. It was God’s will to use them as types and symbols of the coming Sacrifice, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Rather than thinking negatively about sacrifice, as you apparently assume modern man does, Scripture teaches us to rejoice and exalt in this provision of the Lord even if the notion of a bloody sacrifice may be distasteful to a modern mind. Modern man needs to hear how the apostle Paul rejoiced in the sacrifice of Christ. He knew that speaking of the crucified, sacrificed, Savior was foolishness to the Greek, yet he exalted in the message of the cross (1 Cor 1:18-2:16).

In the **third place**, you write in your response about “the difference between a sacrifice according to the Mosaic Law and the sacrifice of Jesus.” In *Cruciaal* you even say that “in strikte zin was Jezus’ dood geen offer” (54). What is the point of making such a statement? You back it up by saying that he was not a Levitical priest, that a priest did not kill Jesus, that he did not die in the temple on an altar and that he died on unholy ground (54). All of this betrays a lack of understanding on the nature of Old Testament types and symbols. That to which a type or symbol points is not the same as the type or symbol itself. Scripture makes clear what each type or symbol points to. And so the sacrificial service functioned as a type and symbol which had reference beyond itself, namely to the bloody atoning sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Scripture makes clear that due to the nature of the case, an exact parallel in the fulfillment with all the different aspects of the Old Testament sacrificial service is not called for and we should not try to find such parallels or question Scripture about it. The central point is that blood needed to be shed for the atoning of sin. This was the heart of the matter in the Old Testament and it was graciously fulfilled in Christ’s death on the cross. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We do not need to point out to you as a professor teaching at a confessional seminary the truth of the above as is evident in Scripture and as you yourself confess in Articles 20 and 21 of the Belgic Confession. In light of the above, we do not agree with your writing to us that “I had good reasons to signal the difference between a sacrifice according to the Mosaic Law and the sacrifice of Jesus.” We do not believe that there are good reasons to do so.

In this connection we also reject your contention that the confessions’ way of speaking of atonement originated in the Middle Ages. We believe it finds its origin in Scripture, as the relevant Scripture proofs found in the confessions also indicate. Furthermore, we should not create false dilemmas between what Scripture says and the church’s dogmatic formulations. For example, you state that one will not find the word “satisfaction” within Scripture. However, though the word itself may not be found in Scripture, the essence of it certainly is (Rom 3:25, Heb 2:17 “propitiation”). What we confess about Christ’s sacrifice comes from and is grounded in Scripture. Your reasoning (*Cruciaal*, 54) does not convince.

With respect to our criticism concerning your discussion on sacrifice that “with this type of reasoning Burger downplays, ignores, or even denies the importance of Christ’s paying for our sins with his bloody sacrifice,” we do not say that you intentionally deny the importance of Christ’s paying for our sins, but the type of reasoning that you employed can lead to such downplaying and even denial of the importance of Christ’s paying for our sins. For example, you write that “God beantwoordt menselijk kwaad liefdevol, door Jezus’ dood te gebruiken als oplossing voor onze zonden” (*Cruciaal*, 61). God used Christ’s death as a solution for our sins. Stating it this way gives the impression that Christ’s death was not preordained but that in Christ’s giving himself wholeheartedly to God in sacrificial obedience, he happened to end up on the cross and God then used the crucifixion as a solution for our sins. But Christ himself emphasized the necessity of his death and the coming cross (e.g., Matt 16:21; Luke 24:26). This

was all preordained to fulfill the Scriptures (e.g., Luke 22:37; 24:44). You have now clarified the issue by writing in your letter to us that you believe that “God’s will includes Christ’s death on the cross.” We are happy to read that clear statement for such clarity was not evident in your article in *Cruciaal*. This lack of clarity in your article is what apparently led us to misread (in your view) your comments on God’s love without paying the necessary attention to his justice. However, as we mentioned earlier in this letter, you cannot do justice to Christ’s sacrifice and say, as you do in your letter to us, “my article does not deal with the satisfaction of God’s justice. It is about sacrifice, not about the courtroom” et cetera. You cannot discuss sacrifice in isolation from why God ordained sacrifices to begin with.

In conclusion with respect to our first question, we remain convinced that considering the article we were critiquing that we were justified in our careful statement that “It *appears* that Burger wants to express the gospel in such a way that it is more understandable and acceptable to our current postmodern culture by downplaying the element of sacrifice” (emphasis added).

**Our second question** to you in our letter of July 12, 2016, was “Have you since revised your views and publicly withdrawn your contested views as published in *Cruciaal*?” We are happy that you wrote: “I do not deny the doctrine of penal substitution. I do affirm and believe that our Lord Jesus Christ in our stead bore the punishment that we deserved for our sin (cf. Is 53:5); he was cursed in our stead and to redeem us from the curse of the law (cf. Gal 3:13).” However, it appears that this affirmation was not clear in your essay in *Cruciaal*, since you state near the end of your letter of March 2, 2017, that “I have tried to clarify my position and answer critical questions several times . . . Until today, I have received the impression that my clarifications were convincing for members of the GKv, or at least satisfactory.” We obviously were not the only ones who had difficulty with your *Cruciaal* essay. We understand the above as an admission that you needed to do further explanation of your views in order to satisfy others of your orthodoxy on this point. Although not technically a revision of your views, it did constitute a needed revisiting of your article which was indeed apparently confusing not only to us but to others also.

As committee we are thankful for the clarification which you have given us, but we do not think that we have misrepresented your views as articulated in your article in *Cruciaal* in our report to Synod Dunnville 2016.

May the Lord our God give you everything you need to train ministers of the Word of God for the faithful preaching of Christ crucified and resurrected.

Yours in Him

For the Subcommittee of Relations with the churches in the Netherland  
J. de Gelder, J. Moesker, C. Van Dam, Gerard J. Nordeman, secretary

## APPENDIX P

### Involvement of the Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) with The National Synod in The Netherlands, between 2014 and 2017

General Synod Dunnville 2016 (Acts Art 104, rec.4.4.7) gave the Subcommittee for contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (lib.) also the mandate *to monitor the results of the GKv's involvement with the National Synod.*

#### 1. Background

- a. In 2010 the “National Synod/Protestant Forum” project was launched in The Netherlands as a personal initiative of some leading members of the Protestant Church in The Netherlands (PKN), in cooperation with members of other protestant churches. The GKv was not involved in the start-up, but was soon invited to participate. Initially it was presented as a discussion platform, an occasion to meet each other and discuss theological and ecclesiastical issues, without any mutual commitments and obligations.
- b. Synod Harderwijk 2011 approved the decision of Deputaten Kerkelijke Eenheid (DKE – Deputies Ecclesiastical Unity) to accept the invitation to participate in 2010, and instructed DKE to continue to be involved.
- c. In the meantime this so-called Synod has evolved into an organization with official representatives, appointed by the participating churches. Also the number of participating churches has expanded.
- d. Follow-up meetings were held in 2013 and 2016. These meetings were all held in the city of Dordrecht. This was intentional. The plan was triggered by the fact that in 2018/2019 it will be 400 years since the well-known Synod of Dort 1618/1619 was held. The plan is that the last meeting of this National synod/Protestant Forum will be held in 2018/2019, and again in Dort.

#### 2. Observations from the DKE report and supplementary report for GS Meppel 2017

- a. It can no longer be said that in this so-called “National Synod” people just meet for a free and non-committal exchange of theological thoughts and ideas, like it's done at a conference. The 2016 edition of the National Synod has proposed that the participating churches enter into a covenant. At this point in time the commitments and practical implications of such a covenant are not clear yet. Some suggest allowing each other's ministers on the pulpit and receiving each other's members at the Lord's Supper.
- b. As confessional basis for such a covenant the Nice Creed has been proposed. The goal is to have these matters finalized at the meeting of this National Synod in 2018/2019, at the joined commemoration of the Synod of Dort 1618/19.

- c. DKE recommended that Synod Meppel decide to participate in this covenant, taking into consideration the identity and responsibility of the Reformed Churches in obedience to God's Word.
- d. The deputies emphasize that ecclesiastical unity of the participating churches is not the purpose of this covenant.

### 3. General Synod Meppel's decision

GS Meppel 2017 adopted the recommendations of DKE, and instructed the DKE to continue to participate in the activities of the National synod, and – if possible – to join the proposed covenant of protestant churches in The Netherlands on behalf of the GKv. As they do so, the deputies have to take into consideration the identity and responsibility of the Reformed Churches in obedience to God's Word and ask attention for the value of "het gereformeerd belijden"<sup>24</sup>

### 4. Evaluation

That this National Synod scheduled for 2018/19 is seen as a fitting way to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Synod of Dort 1618/19, without any critical comments, is telling.

In 1618/19 the Synod of Dort was convened to protect the unity of the church based on the truth of the gospel. That's why the false teachings of the Remonstrants were rejected, the Remonstrants themselves were removed, and the Canons of Dort were adopted as a Reformed Confession and added to the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic confession as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Form of Unity.

The National Synod of 2018/19 has the opposite purpose. It is the plan to bring together in some sort of superficial unity, a variety of churches with essential doctrinal differences. This is not meant to protect the truth of the gospel, but is only possible by ignoring this truth. The result is that in 2018/19 Arminius, who in 1618/19 was shown the door as a false teacher, is warmly welcomed again.

With the decision of Synod Meppel 2017 that the GKv will continue to be actively involved in this National Synod project, with DKE officially being represented at the Steering Committee, we believe that the GKv is compromising its stand for the truth of God's Word, as summarized in the Reformed Confessions.

---

<sup>24</sup> In the report Dutch expressions should be in English, but how do we translate the expression "het gereformeerd belijden"? It's not the same as "de gereformeerde belijdenis". That would, of course, be 'the reformed confession'. But it's more vague. Perhaps something like: "confessing the reformed faith". Any other and better ideas?

## APPENDIX Q

### Press Release ICRC 2017

The ninth meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches was held in Jordan, Ontario, Canada, from July 12 – 19, 2017, in the facilities of the Immanuel United Reformed Church and the Heritage Christian School. It was a blessed time of fellowship with one another as delegates and with our hosts, which not only included the calling Immanuel United Reformed Church of Jordan, and her local sister churches, but also regional church members of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), Free Reformed Churches (FRCNA), Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), and Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC). The welcome was warm and generous, and a great opportunity to see and experience the Lord's work in this part of his vineyard.

Following the beginning of the meeting with a Prayer Service held under the auspices of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) on Wednesday evening, July 12, we were able to work our way steadily through the schedule, capably led by the Chairman, the Rev. Dick Moes.

It was our brother Moes, who, throughout the meeting, in light of the 500<sup>th</sup> year since the nailing of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, focused on four of the Reformational Solas – Solus Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, and Sola Scriptura in the morning devotions.

It was a joy to receive into the membership of the ICRC the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) and the Presbyterian Church of Uganda (PCU) after reports from sponsoring denominations and consideration by the Membership Committee. We look forward to a fruitful work together with them. Already the CRCA is involved with the Presbyterian Church in Eastern Australia (PCEA) in hosting the 2019 Asia-Pacific Regional Conference due to be held in Australia.

It was with much sadness, however, that the Conference suspended the membership of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN), as it was deemed that they have broken with Article IV:4 of the Constitution in their recent synodical decision to permit the ordination of persons to the offices of minister and ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture. This took up much time in the meeting as there was much discussion and various options considered. A number spoke of the blessed help the RCN have been in the past to their federations and so this involved an extra heaviness of heart. Yet it was quite clear that the view of the RCN is not the view of any of the other churches in the ICRC, and certainly was not the view of any of those, apart from the RCN, who spoke at our meeting. Please pray for our brethren there, that the Lord in his grace would turn them in repentance to his Word and so be able to join fully with us once more.

The various Committee Reports brought out the Lord's blessing upon the member churches and service to him in various spheres – Theological Education, Diaconal, and Missions. A new Committee set up is the Publications Committee which takes in the new ICRC magazine – *Lux Mundi* – and the current website. In connection with these different aspects of ICRC work there were four very well received and helpful panel discussions on theological education and growing future leaders for the Reformed faith, the ministry of mercy and the Reformed faith, bringing the Reformed faith to Asia, and on the future direction of the ICRC.

There was also much time given for bilateral and multilateral meetings among the member delegations. It was also a blessing to have a number of observer churches present.

Financially the ICRC is very healthy with an excess from the past four-year period. It was felt prudent to retain such a balance and continue to receive membership assessment payments to meet the actual costs for the next four-year period.

A highlight of the meetings were the evening addresses, given respectively by the Rev. Hiralal Solanki on 'A Brief Overview of Christian Mission in India', the Rev. Dr. Derek Thomas on John Calvin's preaching on the Book of Job, Dr. Matthew Ebenezer on 'Bringing the Reformed Faith to India', and Dr. Joel Beeke on 'Reformed Piety: Covenantal and Experiential.' There was also a valuable time of discussion on these occasions where we were joined by many from the local Reformed churches.

We were well provided for – physically and spiritually. We leave refreshed in the precious faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and looking confidently for future worship and service of him, praying the Head of the church to keep us faithful to his Word.

### 8.2.3 Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA)

**Report to  
General Synod Edmonton 2019**

**Committee for  
Contact with Churches in North America**

## Abbreviations

ARPC	Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church
CanRC	Canadian Reformed Churches
CCCA (1998-2007)	Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas
CCCNA	Committee for Contact with Churches in North America
CEIR	Committee for Ecumenicity and Inter-church relations (OPC)
CICR	Committee for Inter-church relations (ERQ)
CGK	Christian Reformed Churches (Netherlands)
CRCA	Committee for relations with churches abroad (CanRC)
CPEU	Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
EF	Ecclesiastical Fellowship
ERQ	Reformed Churches of Quebec
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCNA	Free Reformed Churches of North America
GA	General Assembly (OPC)
HRC	Heritage Reformed Congregations
ICR	Inter-church relations committee (RCUS)
ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
IRC	Inter-church relations committee (RPCNA)
KPCA-K	Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin)
NAPARC	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
OPC	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
RCN	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)
RCUS	Reformed Church in the United States
RPCNA	Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
URCNA	United Reformed Churches in North America

## **Table of Contents**

### A. General Report

1. Introduction
  - 1.1 Committee Members
  - 1.2 General Activity
2. General Mandate
3. Subcommittee East
  - 3.1 General Activity
4. Subcommittee West
  - 4.1 General Activity
5. Expenses

### B. Church Reports

1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
2. Free Reformed Churches
3. Heritage Reformed Congregations
4. Orthodox Presbyterian Church
5. Reformed Churches of Quebec
6. Reformed Churches of the United States
7. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

### C. NAPARC Report

### D. Combined CRCA-CCCNA Report

**Committee for Contact with Churches in North America**  
**Report to Synod Edmonton 2019**

October 29, 2018

Beloved brothers in the Lord,

With brotherly greetings in the name of Christ, we submit our report to General Synod Edmonton, as mandated by General Synod Dunnville 2016. We do so with thanks to God for His blessing upon the numerous brotherly meetings, discussions, and communications that have occurred during the past three years. We trust that the churches will continue to pray for an increase in the unity of the faith among the churches with whom we enjoy ecclesiastical fellowship or other close relations.

We would also like to our express our thanks as a committee for what was stated in Article 49, Consideration 3.3 of General Synod Dunnville 2016, namely, that “When we enter into EF we accept each other as faithful churches without qualifications. Differences that were noted and discussed prior to EF, but which did not hinder entering into EF, do not require resolution. It is incorrect to speak of “outstanding differences.” The word “outstanding” implies a need for resolution. Bringing up these issues repeatedly, without proper proof of necessity, is potentially damaging to sister-church relationships. Discussion of these issues may take place naturally in the course of EF, but a specific mandate, identifying particular issues, need not be given.” Not mandating our committee to deal with particular issues was well-received by our counter-parts in other churches.

***A. General Report***

***1. Introduction***

***1.1 Committee Members***

General Synod Dunnville 2016 made the following appointments to the CCCNA: (*Acts 2016*, pp. 101-102):

Subcommittee East: the Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt (2019), G. Bos (2022), the Rev. M. Jagt (convenor) (2025), J. Temple (2025)

Subcommittee West: the Rev. S. Vandavelde (2025), H. VanDelden (2019), L. Vanderveen (convenor) (2022), P. Veenendaal (2025)

***Recommendation:***

Brs. Vandeburgt and VanDelden will complete their terms in 2019. Normally, the committee would recommend that these brothers be discharged from the CCCNA and be thanked for their years of service to the churches as members of this committee. However, in light of the recommendations of the combined CRCA – CCCNA report found elsewhere we recommend that Rev. D. Vandeburgt and br. H. VanDelden be re-appointed to the CCCNA since their significant years of experience would be of great

assistance should General Synod adopt the recommendations of the combined report.

### ***1.2 General activity***

Plenary meetings of the CCCNA were held on September 8, 2017 and October 18, 2018 with the following brothers appointed as the executive:

- a. Chairman: Rev. M. Jagt
- b. General Secretary: Rev. D. Vandeburgt
- c. Treasurer: Br. H. Van Delden

Two subcommittees were maintained according to the location of committee members in Ontario and Manitoba, with the exception of Rev. D. Vandeburgt who lives in the west but serves the east; the following division of labour was agreed upon:

Subcommittee East: Contacts with ARP, ERQ, FRC, HRC, KPCA and OPC,  
Subcommittee West: Contacts with RCUS, RPCNA, and NAPARC

Minutes of the subcommittee meetings were exchanged via email to promote good communication and mutual scrutiny.

At least two members of each subcommittee were responsible for attending NAPARC in 2016, 2017 and 2018. During NAPARC these members met with their counter-parts. The meetings were as follows:

- a. ERQ – November 8, 2016 and November 16, 2017
- b. FRCNA – November 15, 2017
- c. HRC – November 9, 2016 and November 14, 2017
- d. OPC – November 8, 2016 and November 16, 2017
- e. RCUS – November 8, 2016 and November 14, 2017
- f. RPCNA – November 9, 2016 and November 15, 2017

*The CCCNA finds it difficult to submit its report **six** months prior to the next general synod as this precludes reporting on the annual NAPARC meeting and the bi-laterals held every November prior to the next general synod.*

Four committee members met via video-conference with two members of the CRCA on March 1, 2018. This meeting has resulted in a combined report of the CRCA and the CCCNA that you can find at the end of our report.

## ***2. General Mandate***

General Synod Dunnville 2016 (*Acts 2016*, p.37) decided to mandate the CCCNA as follows:

1. To continue contact with all those churches in North America with which we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) according to the adopted rules, and in accordance with the mandates described in decisions taken by synod with respect to the churches with

which we have ongoing relationships;

2. To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in the Americas;
3. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in the Americas;
4. To report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next general synod, and to present to the churches a report of its work six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

For the sake of convenience, here follow the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) that the committee applies in fulfilling its mandate. These rules were determined by Synod Lincoln 1992 (*Acts*, p. 33):

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

***Recommendation:***

That the mandate, as stated by Synod 2016, be continued for the CCCNA until 2022 with one change, namely, to point 4 so that it reads:

*To report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next general synod, and to present to the churches a report of its work **five** months prior to the convening of the next general synod.*

**3. Subcommittee East**

**3.1 General activity**

Meetings of subcommittee East were held on June 23, 2016, March 20, 2018 and October 4, 2018.

Rev. M. Jagt served as chairman; Rev. D. Vandeburgt served as recording and

corresponding secretary.

#### **4. Subcommittee West**

##### **4.1 General Activity**

Meetings of Subcommittee West were held on June 27, 2016, January 10, 2017, April 26, 2018 and September 12, 2018.

At these meetings, br. L. Vanderveen served as chairman; br. H. VanDelden as corresponding secretary, br. P. Veenendaal as recording secretary and Rev. S. Vandavelde as vice-all.

#### **5. Expenses**

From the time of Synod Dunnville 2016, until October 29, 2018, \$ 23514.70 has been spent in fulfilling the mandate.

Respectfully submitted by your committee,

##### Subcommittee East:

G. Bos (Guelph, ON)  
M. Jagt (Fergus, ON)  
J. Temple (London, ON)  
D. Vandeburgt (Langley, BC)

##### Subcommittee West:

H. VanDelden (Winnipeg, MB)  
S. Vandavelde (Denver, CO)  
L. Vanderveen (Carman, MB)  
P. Veenendaal (Winnipeg, MB)

## **B.1 Report on the CanRC relationship with the Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church**

### ***Introduction:***

The CanRC does not have EF with the ARP but is a member of NAPARC together with the ARP.

### ***Mandate of GS 2016***

GS Dunnville 2016 gave a general mandate to the committee in art. 49:

- 4.1.2 To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in North America;
- 4.1.3 To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in North America;
- 4.1.4 To report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next general synod and to present to the churches a report of its work six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

### ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018***

#### **2017:**

- The committee received an invitation from the Inter-church Relations Committee of the ARP to send delegates (as observers) to their 2017 General Synod. Two members of the committee attended and were welcomed by the Moderator of Synod as observers. No fraternal greeting was delivered to the assembly.
- An informal, bi-lateral meeting was held with the ARP delegates to NAPARC in November of 2017.

#### **2018:**

- The committee received an invitation from the Inter-church Relations Committee of the ARP to send delegates (as observers) to their 2018 General Synod. A member of the committee attended and was welcomed by the Moderator of Synod as an observer. No fraternal greeting was delivered to the assembly.

### ***Observations:***

- The ARP is a denomination with a very long history. There are church communities that can trace their roots back to the days of the American Revolution in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Their heritage is also rooted in England and Scotland – as opposed to our continental heritage.
- As a result of this lengthy history, they often have many small congregations even within a relatively limited geographical region. Families have often been worshipping in a given church for generations and they are emotionally tied to those communities as a result.
- Though there are families with connections to the ARP that stretch back for generations, many of the rank-and-file ARP members have come from fundamentalist/Baptist backgrounds. As a consequence of this diversity of backgrounds, while their pastors know and love the Westminster standards, their members may be less familiar with these documents.
- Broadly speaking, catechism instruction and preaching are not part of their history or current practice. Having said that, in a significant number of congregations, efforts are being made to introduce catechetical instruction for the whole congregation.
- Most ARP churches have a single service on Sundays. Having said that, most ARP congregations also have Sunday school prior to the service – and Sunday school is attended

by all members of the congregation. These Sunday school classes generally involve either Bible study, or doctrinal discussions. As a federation, the ARP produces curriculum to serve as a basis for Sunday school instruction.

- Though the ARP has congregations as far north as Pennsylvania and New York, and as far west as California, they are a deeply southern denomination. Their southern character shapes the way in which they interact with others, including other denominations/federations. They have been exceptionally hospitable in welcoming delegates from sister churches. That hospitality included being welcomed by the Moderator as a guest in both 2017 and 2018 and being included in a dinner hosted for fraternal delegates by the Synod.

- Our brothers and sisters in the ARP are very attached to their institutions, most specifically, Erskine Seminary and Bonclarken Conference Centre.

- A particular high point of the ARP Synod in 2017 involved the “return to the fold” of Erskine Seminary. Erskine had been in the grip of liberalism for some time and a concerted effort was made to bring Erskine under more direct Synodical control and to return it to a conservative, biblical orientation. Much rejoicing occurred at GS 2017 as this long struggle came to an end.

- Historically, the ARP’s closest ecclesiastical relationships have been with the RPCNA. The closeness of this relationship can be seen from the historic decision to leave Bonclarken in 2019 and convene a concurrent Synod with the RPCNA at Geneva College in Pittsburgh. This will be the second time the ARP and RPCNA Synods have met concurrently. They met jointly in 2015 at Bonclarken.

- Like their “cousins” in the RPCNA, the ARP allows women to serve in the office of deacon. Again, as with the RPCNA, they understand the diaconate as a service, rather than an authoritative, office within the church. At a rough guess, some 20% of ARP churches have women serving in the capacity. There are, however, those within the denomination who would like to see this practice reconsidered. That sentiment has been expressed particularly by their Canadian Presbytery. Where women deacons are serving, the motivation may reflect an inability to find men who are willing and able, rather than an explicit desire to see women serving in this capacity. It is also important to note that this practice not only flows out of particular exegetical heritage, but that it long predates emergence of Second Wave Feminism in the twentieth century.

- The ARP as a denomination are active, intentional and deliberate in their efforts at church planting.

- Several churches within the Canadian Presbytery have established Gillespie Academy in Woodstock Ontario. Gillespie Academy offers a one year post-secondary program designed to prepare students for university, future employment, or the building of a Christian home. The number of students enrolling at Gillespie Academy has grown steadily over the past several years. Their numbers have included young people from CanRC churches.

- An informal meeting between the CanRC and ARP delegates was held at NAPARC in 2017. By all accounts, this was a brotherly and productive meeting.

- Dr. T. VanRaalte attended a meeting of Catawba Presbytery in October 2017. A student from CRTS was being taken on as a student-under-care by that Presbytery.

- Chatham CanRC has established a close relationship with Rev. Henry Bartsch who pastors the ARP congregation in Chatham. Rev. Bartsch has helped to support this congregation during the time of their vacancy.

**Recommendations:**

The CCCNA recommends that Synod decide:

- 1. To mandate the committee to
  - 1.1 To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the ARP.
  - 1.2 To submit its report to the churches *five* months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**Brief description of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church:**

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Canada and the United States (9 Churches in the Canadian Presbytery)</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>1782 / Philadelphia – Union of the Associate Presbytery and the Reformed Presbytery</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>Approximately 270</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>Approximately 30,000</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Session</i>		<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Presbytery</i>		<i>Quarterly</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>		<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Erskine Theological Seminary</i>		

**History of the Relationship:**

The CanRC and the ARP have had no official history of relationship. The relationship that has grown over the past two years has arisen out of the ecumenical efforts of the ARP that we as committee have sought to reciprocate.

## **B.2 Report on the CanRC relationship with the Free Reformed Churches of North America**

### ***Introduction***

The CanRC does not have EF with the FRCNA but is a member of NAPARC together with the FRCNA.

### ***Mandate of GS 2016***

GS Dunnville 2016 gave a general mandate to the committee in art. 49:

- 4.1.2 To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in North America;
- 4.1.3 To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in North America;
- 4.1.4 To report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next general synod and to present to the churches a report of its work six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

### ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018***

#### **2017:**

- There was an informal lunch meeting at ICRC 2017 between FRC delegates and CanRC delegates of the CRCA and CCCNA
- The committee held a meeting with the FRCNA at NAPARC 2017

### ***Observations***

- With our joint membership in both ICRC and NAPARC there has been an opportunity to renew acquaintances with the FRCNA's external relations committee.
- At our meeting on November 15, 2017 we discussed the following:
  - The reasons for the pause in our relationship over the past decade.
  - The perceptions of one another when it comes to the topics of: experiential preaching, the regeneration of infants and what it means that children are sanctified in Christ.
  - The mutual desire on the part of the respective committee members to resume contact and, under the Lord's blessing, have the relationship between our two federations grow, without the pressure of speaking about federative unity.
- General Synod 2018 of the FRCNA decided to resume relationship with the CanRC at their Level One correspondence (See Appendix A for the FRCNA rules for EF).

### ***Recommendations***

The CCCNA recommends that synod decide:

1. To mandate the committee to
  - 1.1 To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the FRCNA.
  - 1.2 To accept the invitation of the FRCNA to enter into their Level One correspondence with the CanRC.
  - 1.3 To submit its report to the churches *five* months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

### ***Brief Description of the FRCNA***

Source of church data: NAPARC Member Report 2018

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Canada and the United States of America</i>
Origin(s)	<i>Post WW II immigration from CGK in Netherlands</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity</i>
Number of churches & church plants	<i>21</i>
Membership numbers	<i>5139 members of whom 2849 are communicant</i>
General Assembly	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary</i>

### ***History of the relationship***

The CanRC and the FRCNA had an active working relationship with one another at the federative level for the period 1998-2008 (see decisions below). This relationship broke down towards the end of that period. In 2007 the CanRC, in response to certain concerns of the FRCNA, chose to cease pursuing discussions with the FRCNA until such time as they requested resumption of contact. There was a brief resumption of contact at NAPARC in 2008 but since that time there had been no contact until 2017.

### ***General Synod Decisions Relating to the FRCNA***

#### **Acts of Synod 1974, Article 20**

- The Church at Lincoln overtures General Synod 1974 to appoint deputies to establish contact with the Free (and Old) Christian Reformed Churches of Canada and the USA (this was the original name of the FRCNA). Synod decided not to grant this request due to insufficient information about these churches.

#### **Acts of Synod 1977, Article 94**

- The church at Edmonton overtured Synod to add to the mandate of the Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad “to take up contact with the Free Reformed Churches Of North America as requested by the church at Lincoln.” Synod denied this request because “no new evidence” for this action was given.

#### **Acts of Synod 1995, Article 52**

- Overtures from the church at Aldergrove and the church at Langley requesting Synod to appoint a committee to take up contact with the FRCNA with a view to work towards a union of our respective churches. The overtures were declared inadmissible on the grounds that they had not first come to the minor assemblies.

#### **Acts of Synod 1998, Article 98**

- Decision to
  - Take up contact with the External Relations Committee of the FRCNA
  - To initiate fraternal dialogue with the FRCNA with a view towards establishing federative unity

### **Acts of Synod 2001, Article 92**

- Decision
  - To acknowledge that the CanRCs have been received into the stage of ‘limited contact’ of the FRCNA unity guidelines at the FRCNA Synod, May, 2000, and thank the FRCNA for this initiative
  - To receive their delegates at our synods and send copies of our Acts of Synod to them.
  - To continue dialogue with the FRCNA with a view to promoting federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be on this path

### **Acts of Synod 2004, Article 85**

- Decision to mandate the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU)
  - To continue meeting with the FRCNA with a view to pursuing Ecclesiastical Fellowship, while at the same time promoting and maintaining the desire for federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be on this path;
  - To explore and discuss the matter of federative unity with the FRCNA using as a basis, for example, the document entitled ‘Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government.’;
  - To encourage the FRCNA to be invited to meetings of Canadian Reformed classes and synods, and to send copies of the *Acts of Synod* to each other with the purpose of pursuing meaningful interactions and discussions with the churches at the local level.

### **Acts of Synod 2007, Article 105**

- Decision
  - To cease from pursuing discussions with the FRCNA
  - To ask the CPEU to send a letter to the FRCNA informing it of this decision and expressing the desire to resume contact when there is interest from their side.

### **Acts of Synod 2010, Article 30**

- Decision
  - To utilize NAPARC to meet with the brothers from the FRCNA within the framework of the basis of the Council
  - To conclude regretfully that our churches at this time have no formal ecclesiastical relations with the FRCNA

## **APPENDIX A**

The Free Reformed Churches have **three levels of contact** with other churches. They are as follows:

### **LEVEL 1 - LIMITED CONTACT**

Level 1 includes the following:

1. sending a delegate(s) to attend each other’s Synods (or equivalent). Visiting delegates attending our Synod may be asked for advice;
2. exchanging copies of the *Acts of Synod* (or equivalent)
3. offering spiritual support. This may include:
  - a. calling attention to each other’s spiritual and ecclesiastical

- problems with mutual efforts toward Scriptural solutions;
- b. warning each other of spiritual dangers which arise and which spread and begin to dominate the church of Christ;
  - c. correcting each other in love regarding any slackening in connection with the confession or practice of “the faith once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3);
  4. co-operative activity in areas of common concern. For example: offering material support and co-operation or consultation with regard to mission work, theological education, etc.

## **LEVEL 2 - LIMITED CORRESPONDENCE**

Level 2 includes the following:

1. all privileges outlined in Level 1 (above)
2. access to the Lord’s Supper;
3. permission for visiting ministers to preach on each other’s pulpits.

## **LEVEL 3 - FULL CORRESPONDENCE**

Level 3 includes the following:

1. all privileges outlined in Level 1 and 2 (above)
2. the mutual acceptance of each other’s (membership) attestations;
3. mutually considering each other’s ministers eligible for call;
4. mutual consultation with each other regarding significant actions such as, for example, the revision of the confession or of the Church Order, the extension or modification of a relationship of correspondence, etc.;

### **NOTE:**

1. Agreeing to establish Level 1 contact does not mean either denomination is obligated or even expected to move towards the other two levels. It does, however, open the door for such a level of contact under the blessing of the Lord. Level 1 should primarily be viewed as a communicative level in an official and brotherly manner.
2. Before any level of contact can be established it must be made evident that there is an unreserved commitment to and agreement with (1) the infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures and, (2) the validity and relevance of the Reformed confessions

## **B.3 Report on the CanRC relationship with the Heritage Reformed Congregations**

### ***Introduction***

The CanRC does not have EF with the HRC but is a member of NAPARC together with the HRC.

### ***Mandate of GS 2016***

GS Dunnville 2016 gave a general mandate to the committee in art. 49

- 4.1.2 To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in North America;
- 4.1.3 To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in North America;
- 4.1.4 To report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next general synod and to present to the churches a report of its work six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

### ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018***

#### **2016:**

- The committee received an invitation to attend the General Synod of the HRC. Two committee members attended and brought greetings.
- The committee held a bi-lateral meeting with the HRC Church Correspondence Committee on November 9, 2016.

#### **2017:**

- The committee received a notice from the HRC Church Correspondence Committee that their General Synod 2017 had instructed them to, “contact the Canadian Reformed Churches to discuss the possibility of entering into official ecclesiastical fellowship” with the CanRC. For the HRC that would begin with their Level One Correspondence (see Appendix B below).
- The committee held a bi-lateral meeting with the HRC Church Correspondence Committee on November 14, 2017.

#### **2018:**

- The committee received an invitation to attend the General Synod of the HRC. A committee member attended and brought greetings.

### ***Observations***

- The HRC was established in 1993 after the Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC) underwent a split related to church-orderly and theological issues. The most substantive underlying issue to future HRC members and congregations was Christ-centered preaching, combined with the preaching of an unconditional offer of grace.
- The HRC is confessionally rooted in the Continental Reformation and influenced greatly by English Puritanism. The word "Heritage" in the title reflects a commitment and desire to be true to this legacy.
- With our joint membership in NAPARC there has been a growing relationship between the members of the CCCNA and the HRC Church Correspondence Committee.
- As we have observed the work of the HRC at NAPARC and during their GS it is evident that the HRC are faithful churches of Jesus Christ.

- The meeting with the HRC Church Correspondence Committee on November 9, 2016 was introductory in nature.
- The meeting with the HRC Church Correspondence Committee on November 14, 2017 was more substantive in nature. We discussed their Synod’s instruction to enter into Level One Correspondence with the CanRC. We also discussed ways in which we can at this stage be doing things to promote the cause of our Lord Jesus. The HRC hopes to see NAPARC churches working together in Biblical, reformed, confessional based counseling. Lastly, an inquiry was made on the CanRC view of the child in the covenant. The committee members present referred the HRC brothers to the book, “The Bond of the Covenant within the Bounds of the Confession” with a view to having a further discussion on this topic at our 2018 NAPARC meeting.

***Recommendations***

The CCCNA recommends that synod decide:

1. To mandate the committee to
  - 1.1 Accept the invitation of the HRC to enter into their Level One correspondence with the CanRC.
  - 1.2 Continue discussions with the HRC with a view towards their Level 2 of EF.
  - 1.3 Submit its report to the churches *five* months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

***Brief Description of the HRC***

Source of church data: NAPARC Member Report 2018

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Canada and the United States of America</i>
Origin(s)	<i>Post WW II immigration from CGK in Netherlands</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity Westminster Standards</i>
Number of churches & church plants	<i>9</i>
Membership numbers	<i>2171 members of whom 1271 are communicant</i>
General Assembly	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary</i>

***History of the relationship***

The CanRC and the HRC have had no official history of relationship. The relationship that has grown over the past three years has arisen out of the ecumenical efforts of the HRC that we as committee have sought to reciprocate.

## **Appendix B**

### **Descriptions of Levels of Ecclesiastical Fellowship - HRC As amended by Synod 2014**

#### **Level 1: Informal Contact**

1. This informal level allows relationships to develop with like-minded churches or denominations without requiring a formal tie. This level includes only informal communication with various churches and denominations around us, both in our local community as well as beyond.
2. There is no obligation or commitment except for us to witness the Reformed Biblical truth to them.
3. Meetings with their representatives are to be held by the Church Correspondence Committee in order to determine if there is sufficient ground to bring a request before Synod that this denomination/congregation ought to be considered eligible to move to the second level of correspondence. Synod must approve of this request before any other level of correspondence can be carried out. These meetings would seek to determine the doctrinal position of the denomination or congregation and whether or not they uphold the Three Forms of Unity and/or the Westminster Standards.

#### **Level 2: Formal Correspondence**

1. A church and/or denomination would need to direct its committee representatives to verbally assent to the Formula for Public Declaration of Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity and/or Westminster Standards in behalf their broadest assembly.
2. Copies of the official minutes, without confidential material, of the broadest assemblies are to be sent to each other. A copy of each issue of the official denominational publication is to be sent to one another's consistory members.
3. Representatives of both denominations would continue to meet to determine whether the next level of communication is attainable and desirable and if so, the Church Correspondence Committee would forward this request on to Synod for approval.
4. This is done with the understanding that this level of "Formal Correspondence" must be in place for a minimum of two years before the next level of communication would be considered.

#### **Level 3: Limited Fellowship**

At this level there is a formal acknowledgment that the gifts found in each other's churches can be employed in the churches/denominations for the spiritual building up of the kingdom of God. This level would include everything under "Formal Correspondence" and the following:

1. Each individual consistory of the HRC would be free to invite any minister from those denomination(s)/congregation(s) [which have been given classis approval to attain Level 3 correspondence] to preach in their pulpits.
2. Each individual consistory of the HRC would be free to allow any member from these denomination(s) or /congregation(s) [which have been given synodical approval to attain Level 3 correspondence] to attend the Lord's Supper.
3. Mutual agreement is made with the corresponding denomination/congregation, that delegates would be sent to one another's broadest assemblies as advisory members only. This Level of Fellowship may be revoked at any time by Synod.

**Level 4: Full Fellowship**

1. At this level the realization of Christ's prayer is more fully evidenced.
2. This level includes everything under "Limited Fellowship" as well as:
  - a. Ministers would be considered having full ministerial rights in either federation
  - b. Ministers would be callable from any congregation in either federation without further examination.
3. This full fellowship could include various considerations or stipulations made by both federations in order to arrive at this level. These would mutually be agreed upon by both federations and must not hinder the professed unity expressed.
4. At this point, such fellowship is permanent. This would mean that if either a congregation or the federation departs from the word of God, the recourse is to appeal to the broadest assembly. If no reconciliation is made, sadly, separation must then take place on the basis of the Word of God.

**Level 5: Full Union**

Full union means that a complete amalgamation of two federation of churches has taken place. Such amalgamation will only be proposed after

1. These federations have functioned harmoniously and efficiently at level 4 for a reasonable period of time
2. Be the result of the Synods of both federations having approved of this by a 2/3 majority
3. Constitute a new denomination with a previously agreed upon:
  - a. Set of doctrinal standards
  - b. Church order
  - c. Ecclesiastical structure (e.g. Classes, Regional Synods, Synods)
4. Be the fullest realization of Christ's prayer that His people be one as He and His Father are one.

## **B.4 Report on the CanRC relationship with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin)**

### ***Introduction***

The CanRC does not have EF with the KPCA-K but is a member of NAPARC together with the KPCA-K.

### ***Mandate of GS 2016***

GS Dunnville 2016 gave the following mandate in Article 26:

That Synod decide

- 4.1 To express gratitude to the Lord for the establishment of contact with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K).
- 4.2 To mandate the CCCNA to continue dialogue with the KPCA-K where feasible, with a view to getting to know the KPCA-K better over time.

### ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018***

There was no dialogue or contact with the KPCA-K during this period. The hope is that a bi-lateral meeting will be held at NAPARC 2018.

### ***Recommendations:***

The CCCNA recommends that Synod decide:

- To mandate the CCCNA to continue dialogue with the KPCA-K where feasible, with a view to getting to know the KPCA-K better over time.

### ***Brief Description of the KPCA-K***

Source of church data: NAPARC Member Report 2018

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Canada and the United States of America</i>
Origin(s)	<i>Immigration from Korea</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Apostles' Creed Westminster Standards</i>
Number of churches & church plants	<i>149</i>
Membership numbers	<i>Unkown</i>
General Assembly	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary</i>

### ***History of the Relationship***

The KPCA (Kosin) is a daughter church of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) with whom the Canadian Reformed Churches have had EF since 1992. The KPCA (Kosin) was started in 1985 by the Kosin Korean immigrant community in the United States. Contact between the CanRC and the KPCA (Kosin) was attempted by the CCCA (under synod mandate) in the early 2000's but, due largely to the language barrier, bore little fruit and format attempts were discontinued by Synod Smithers 2007 (see below). After that time some informal acquaintance with the KPCA (Kosin)

began to emerge at NAPARC meetings. This informal acquaintance culminated with an invitation to attend their 30<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2014. Thereafter, we held two bi-lateral meetings with their inter-church relations committee at NAPARC 2014 and 2015.

### ***General Synod Decisions Relating to the KPCA-K***

#### **Acts of Synod 2001, Article 74**

- To mandate the CCCA to contact the Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America as per information submitted by the church at Willoughby Heights.

#### **Acts of Synod 2004, Article 26**

- To mandate the CCCA to contact the Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America with the help of our sister churches in Korea.

#### **Acts of Synod 2007, Article 152**

- Synod decide: not to renew the mandate to the CCCA concerning the KPCA

#### **Acts of Synod 2013, Article 78**

- That Synod decide to receive the supplementary report of the CCCNA and vote in favour of the KPCA's application to NAPARC.

#### **Acts of Synod 2016, Article 26**

- That Synod decide
  - 4.1 To express gratitude to the Lord for the establishment of contact with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K).
  - 4.2 To mandate the CCCNA to continue dialogue with the KPCA-K where feasible, with a view to getting to know the KPCA-K better over time.

## **B.5 Report on the CanRC relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church**

### ***Introduction***

The CanRC entered into EF with the OPC by a decision of GS 2001 (art. 45).

### ***Mandate of GS 2016***

GS Dunnville 2016 (art 61) mandated the committee with respect to the OPC as follows: “*to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the OPC under the adopted rules.*”

### ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018***

#### **2016:**

- Committee members visited the 83<sup>rd</sup> GA of the OPC from June 8-11, 2016 and brought fraternal greetings.
- A meeting with the CEIR was held on November 8, 2016 at NAPARC.

#### **2017:**

- A fraternal greeting was sent by letter to the 84<sup>th</sup> GA of the OPC.
- A meeting with the CEIR was held on November 15, 2017 at NAPARC.

#### **2018:**

- A committee member visited the 85<sup>th</sup> GA of the OPC from June 11-15, 2018 and brought fraternal greetings.

### ***Observations***

- At the meeting with the CEIR at NAPARC 2016 the CanRC highlighted the decisions of the CanRC Synod 2016. A discussion took place on the Synod’s decision not to enter into EF with the RPCNA. The OPC brothers informed the CCCNA that they are eager to identify a missionary doctor who would be able to labour in Uganda. They also inquired as to what oversight in the mission work in Papua New Guinea looks like.
- At the meeting with the CEIR at NAPARC 2017 a substantive discussion took place on the following items:
  - The CanRC mentioned that they have encouraged awareness of the Grand Forks OPC, ND that the Bismarck OPC, ND is overseeing.
  - The OPC explained the significance of their recent ‘commission’ re: RCN. A commission receives the power of the GA to address something on a contingency basis. It is a very rare action to create a commission. This was only the second time in OPC history that a commission was charged. The reason for this was that a motion to suspend or terminate a member of the ICRC can only be initiated by a member church of ICRC based on a decision by their major assembly. Because of its commission the OPC was the only church able to bring this motion during ICRC 2017. The CanRC expressed thanks for the work of the OPC commission at ICRC while the OPC expressed thanks for CanRC work on the matter and for supporting their motion at ICRC.
  - The OPC asked if the CanRC could cross-pollinate their inter-church relations committees (CRCA and CCCNA) to make it easier for our inter-church relations committees to function together.
  - The Canadian churches in the OPC are expected to form a presbytery in the near

- feature.
- The OPC are in the process of updating their rules for EF so that in situations of non-contact they can scale back a relationship from EF to corresponding relationships.
- A brief discussion took place on the new Trinity Psalter Hymnal as well as on certain challenges/tensions that exist within the CanRC on the topic of songs to be sung in worship.
- The OPC informed us via a letter in January of 2018 that they had updated their rules for EF (see appendix C below)
- The OPC informed us via a letter in August of 2018 that their 85<sup>th</sup> General Assembly had decided to elect a committee to propose specific linguistic changes to the doctrinal standards of the OPC (see appendix D below)

**Recommendations**

The CCCNA recommends that synod decide:

1. To continue EF with the OPC under the adopted rules
2. To submit its report to the churches *five* months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**Brief description of OPC**

Source of church data: [www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org)

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>United States and Canada</i>
Origin(s)	<i>1936</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Westminster Standards</i>
Number of churches & church plants	<i>281 churches &amp; 40 church plants</i>
Membership numbers	<i>31,377 members; 23,032 communicant</i>
Frequency of General Assembly	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>No denominational seminary; approved list of seminaries and a denominational training institute.</i>

**History of the relationship**

The OPC made it on to the radar of the CanRC at Synod Hamilton, 1962 via a proposal made by the Regional Synod held in Chatham in 1961. This initial proposal was to seek contact with the OPC. While this proposal was turned down, it resurfaced in 1962 and was accepted at Synod Edmonton 1965. Over time the relationship that developed marked two major milestones. At Synod Coaldale 1977 the CanRC recognized the OPC as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and at Synod Neerlandia 2001 the CanRC established EF with the OPC. Since that time the Head of the Church has blessed the bond between the CanRC and OPC.

## ***General Synod Decisions Relating to the OPC***

Due to the length of material here only the Acts and articles are referenced, not the actual decisions.

- Acts of Synod 1962, Articles 30 and 82 (both in Dutch) and the Short Report Article 12 (in English)
- Acts of Synod 1965, Article 141 (Dutch) and Short Report Article 26 (English)
- Acts of Synod 1968, Article 154
- Acts of Synod 1971, Article 92
- Acts of Synod 1974, Article 149
- Acts of Synod 1977, Article 91
- Acts of Synod 1980, Articles 97 and 152
- Acts of Synod 1983, Article 55
- Acts of Synod 1986, Articles 126-141
- Acts of Synod 1989, Article 94
- Acts of Synod 1992, Article 72
- Acts of Synod 1995, Article 106
- Acts of Synod 1998, Article 130
- Acts of Synod 2001, Article 45
- Acts of Synod 2004, Articles 86 and 88
- Acts of Synod 2007, Article 131
- Acts of Synod 2010, Article 34
- Acts of Synod 2013, Article 42
- Acts of Synod 2016, Article 61

## **Appendix C**

### **Rules for Ecclesiastical Relationships of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church**

Adopted by the 45th (1978) General Assembly, *Minutes of the 45th (1978) General Assembly*, pages 116-117, 123; and as subsequently amended, *Minutes of the 64th (1997) General Assembly*, Articles 130 and 178, pages 29-31, 53; *Minutes of the 67th (2000) General Assembly*, Articles 149 and 151, pages 36-38; *Minutes of the 73rd (2006) General Assembly*,

Articles 159-161, pages 41-43; *Minutes of the 79th (2012) General Assembly*, Articles 64 and 66, pages 15-18; and *Minutes of the 84th (2017) General Assembly*, Articles 88 and 97, pages 31-34.

- A. That we acknowledge the scriptural mandate (Ephesians 4) to express the unity of the church by entering into fellowship with other churches where it is consistent with biblical unity and truth as a visible demonstration of the unity of the church both to the church and to the world.
- B. That our fellowship with other churches consists in three categories. Decisions to enter into or withdraw from such fellowship shall be decided by each church on an individual basis. Because the undertaking of a bilateral relationship of either Ecclesiastical Fellowship or Corresponding Relations carries with it a commitment of substantial resources—in both time and expense—for its implementation, good stewardship of limited resources

requires that these relationships ordinarily be reserved for situations in which the church seeking an ecclesiastical relationship with the OPC is either geographically proximate to the OPC (i.e., situated in North America), or has some other form of substantial contact or history with the OPC (e.g., missionary endeavors, transfers of members, etc.); other churches seeking an ecclesiastical relationship with the OPC are encouraged to seek membership in the ICRC and thereby enter into a relationship of Ecumenical Contact with the OPC.

With regard to those churches that are not geographically proximate to the OPC with which the OPC has a bilateral relationship, the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR) shall periodically review those relationships to ascertain whether the desired substantial contact is being (or given the limited resources, is able to be) maintained. When the CEIR finds that, in God's providence, there has not been the desired significant contact for five or more years, it may propose to the upcoming General Assembly (and consult with its counterpart in the other church prior to doing so) that such Assembly inform the other church that, at the succeeding General Assembly, a proposal to adjust, without prejudice, such bilateral relationship to a relationship of Ecumenical Contact will be docketed for consideration as part of the regular annual report of the CEIR.

1. Ecclesiastical Fellowship is a relationship in which the churches involved are Reformed in their confessional standards, church order and life though there may be such differences between them that union is not possible at this time. It is to be implemented where possible and desirable by;
  - a. Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies
  - b. Occasional pulpit fellowship (by local option)
  - c. Intercommunion, including ready reception of each other's members at the Lord's Supper but not excluding suitable inquiries upon requested transfer of membership, as regulated by each session (consistory)
  - d. Joint action in areas of common responsibility
  - e. Consultation on issues of joint concern, particularly before instituting changes in polity, doctrine, or practice that might alter the basis of the fellowship
  - f. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting Christian unity
  - g. Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another
  - h. Exchange of Minutes (Acts) of the major assemblies
  - i. Exchange of denominational church directories (yearbooks)
  - j. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the confessional standards
  - k. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the (Book or Manual of) Church Order
  - l. Exchange of the most recent denominationally published edition of hymnals or Psalters
  
2. Corresponding Relations is that relationship in which mutual contact with another church is undertaken to become better acquainted with one another with a view towards entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship at some time in the not-too-distant future. It shall be implemented where possible and desirable by:
  - a. Exchange of official representatives at major assemblies
  - b. Joint action in areas of common responsibility
  - c. Consultation on issues of joint concern, particularly before instituting changes in polity, doctrine, or practice that might alter the basis of the relation
  - d. Exchange of Minutes (Acts) of the broadest assemblies
  - e. Exchange of denominational church directories (yearbooks)
  - f. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the confessional standards

- g. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the (Book or Manual of) Church Order
  - h. Exchange of the most recent denominationally published edition of hymnals or Psalters
3. Ecumenical Contact is that relationship in which mutual contact is maintained with other member churches of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) and/or the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) with which the OPC does not presently have either Ecclesiastical Fellowship or Corresponding Relations, in fulfillment of our stated "responsibility to call all churches, including our own, to faithfulness in order to seek the unity of the whole church" (Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church, IV. I). It shall be implemented, as appropriate, by:
- a. Meetings, both formal and informal, of delegates to the quadrennial meeting of the Conference/annual meetings of the Council
  - b. Welcome of official observers at the broadest assemblies
  - c. Communication on issues of joint concern
- d. Mutual labors as members of the Conference/Council in discharge of the purposes of the Conference/Council

## Appendix D

THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Ross W. Graham STATED CLERK | [statedclerk@opc.org](mailto:statedclerk@opc.org)

VIA EMAIL ATTACHMENT *August 28, 2018*

The Canadian and American Reformed Churches  
 The Rev. D. Vandeburgt, Secretary Committee for Contact with  
 Churches in NA 55 'C' Line  
 Orangeville, ON L9W 6C1 Canada

Dear Brothers in Christ,

Greetings in the strong Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is to inform you that the Eighty-fifth (2018) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, in accordance with Chapter XXXU.3 of our Form of Government, determined to elect a committee of seven members, with two alternates, to propose specific linguistic changes to the doctrinal standards of the OPC (The Confession of Faith and Catechisms). That committee is authorized to propose only such changes as do not change the doctrine or meaning of the standards. The kinds of changes that the Assembly authorizes the special committee to consider are limited to the following:

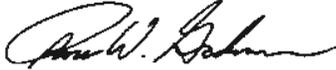
- a. Morphological changes, such as "executeth" to "executes" and "hath" to "has."
- b. Replacing archaic pronouns, e.g., "thou" to "you."
- c. Replacing obsolete and/or archaic words, e.g., "stews" in LC 139. This includes, as in the example just given, replacing words that are still current in the language but are used in obsolete or archaic senses in the standards.
- d. Substituting a modern translation of the Scriptures for the text of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer.

In all cases, the committee is to strive to propose changes that preserve the cadence, memorability, and dignified style of the standards.

The Eighty-fifth (2018) General Assembly also determined to notify the member churches of NAP ARC and other appropriate church bodies with which we have fellowship that it has erected a special committee to propose linguistic updating of the doctrinal standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and include details of the specific mandate, and that it welcomes any input that such churches might desire to give with respect to such proposed linguistic revision. Such input from the Canadian and American Reformed Churches should be addressed to the Chairman of our Special Committee on Updating the Language of the Doctrinal Standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Dr. David C. Noe [dcn3@calvin.edu](mailto:dcn3@calvin.edu).

Thank you.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ross W. Graham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ross" being the most prominent.

Ross W. Graham

## **B.6 Report on the CanRC relationship with the Reformed Churches of Quebec**

### ***Introduction***

The CanRC entered into EF with the ERQ by a decision of GS 2007 (art. 75).

### ***Mandate of GS 2016***

GS Dunnville 2016 mandate the committee with respect to the ERQ as follows in Art. 59:

- 4.1 To thank the Lord for the faithful Reformed witness provided in and by the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ);
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the ERQ under the adopted rules;
- 4.3 To involve the fraternal delegates in discussions at synods in such a way as to honour the sister-to-sister-church relationship;
- 4.4 To encourage the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects.

### ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018***

#### **2016:**

- The committee met with the CICR on November 8, 2016 at NAPARC
- The committee sent written greetings to three synode meetings

#### **2017:**

- The committee sent a written greeting to synode
- Delegates visited the synode on May 13 and Nov 4, 2017
- The committee met with the CICR on November 16, 2017 at NAPARC
- The committee received and responded to an inquiry from one of the CanRC churches regarding the ERQ decisions on Genesis 1.

#### **2018:**

- The committee sent written greetings in response to invitations to two synode meetings.
- The committee sent written greetings to the ERQ Reformation Day and the October 13, 2018 denominational retreat.

### ***Observations***

- The relationship with the ERQ is important to the CanRC for our mutual witness in Canada, for encouraging each other in the increasingly secular Canadian society, for contact between office bearers when members move into each other's area, as well as opportunities related to the specific strengths in the French language which the ERQ offers.
- In addition to the above, the relationship is important to the ERQ for the support at broader assemblies, financial support for specific projects, and mutual cooperation.
- Regarding the issue of the interpretation of Genesis 1, the ERQ decided not to make separate doctrinal pronouncements beside the confessions. It did decide to add specific questions regarding this issue during the examination of ministers and elders by the synode. The CanRC delegates were privileged to witness two elder examinations in person.
- The ERQ brothers raised a concern at the bilateral meeting at NAPARC 2017 regarding the

calling of their ministers by CanRC congregations, as the acceptance of such a call has significant implications for a small federation such as the ERQ. In response, the CanRC delegates clarified the calling process, the autonomy of the local congregation, and the responsibility of a minister to consider all aspects of a new call, as well as the existing call to his current congregation.

### **Recommendations**

The CCCNA recommends that synod decide:

1. To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the ERQ under the adopted rules;
2. To encourage the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects.
3. To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

### **Brief description of the ERQ**

Source of church data: 2018 NAPARC report

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Canada, all congregations in Quebec</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Diverse</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Confession with Preamble Heidelberg Catechism</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>5 churches</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>363 members of whom 234 are communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Synode</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Three times/year</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Support Institut Farel, Montreal, Quebec</i>		

### **History of the relationship**

The relationship between the CanRC and the ERQ was initially based on contact with the Church of Ottawa, who in 1994 presented a detailed proposal to GS Abbotsford, 1995. Investigations and decisions at subsequent synods resulted in a decision to enter into EF at Synod 2007.

The EF relationship has been a positive one, with regular contact, support for specific ERQ projects, including translation work, short term mission trips for CanRC youth to English Language camps for Quebecois youth, invitations to special events, and pulpit exchange opportunities.

### **General Synod Decisions Relating to the ERQ**

#### **Acts of Synod 1995, Article 73**

- to discuss with the deputies of the Église Réformée du Québec the differences in Confession, Church Polity and worship which exist between our two federations;
- to discuss with their deputies their relations with the Christian Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in America, and evaluate them;
- to further investigate whether it is possible to have the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Église Réformée du Québec as part of the same federation;

- to make use of the report submitted by the church at Ottawa and Classis Ontario North;
- to keep the churches informed about the Église Réformée du Québec so that their financial and other needs as missionary churches can be responded to in a positive manner;

**Acts of Synod 1998, Article 97**

- To note with gratitude the contact and developing relationship with the ERQ.
- To decline the invitation of the ERQ to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship at this time.
- To re-appoint the committee for contact with the ERQ with the following mandate:
  - 1. To clarify and discuss the points raised in Consideration B (deacons and deaconesses, liturgical forms, order of worship, supervision of the pulpit, Lord's Day observance, fencing of the table, confessional binding) in view of the concerns raised by the churches;
  - To keep the churches informed about the ERQ so that they may be able to respond to financial and other needs of the ERQ;
  - To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity, and liturgy;
  - To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Synods of the ERQ;

**Acts of Synod 2001, Article 22**

- To note with gratitude that the ERQ is faithful to the Word of God and brings the Reformed confessions and church order to expression in its own context.
- To thankfully note that progress has been made in advancing the development of the relationship.
- To reappoint the committee to continue developing closer ties with the ERQ with the goal of establishing ecclesiastical fellowship by fulfilling the following mandate:
  - To discuss the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards as found in the "Evaluation of Divergences" received by Synod 1986. Considering the limited resources of the ERQ priority should be placed on discussion and clarification of pulpit supervision, fencing of the Lord's table, and confessional accountability;
  - To work towards formalizing a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship under the adopted rules;
  - To encourage the churches to continue supporting the ERQ financially, when needed;
  - To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made on matters of confession, church polity, liturgy, and mission;
  - To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend synods of the ERQ;

**Acts of Synod 2004, Article 25**

- To continue the mandate for the CCCA as it was given in the Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001

**Acts of Synod 2007, Article 75**

- To enter into a Relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the ERQ under the adopted rules.
- To give the committee the following mandate:
  - To convey this decision to the next ERQ Synode, via the Interchurch Committee.
  - To actively engage in the Relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the ERQ under the adopted rules.
  - To express to the Interchurch Committee a willingness to provide encouragement and assistance in the adoption of the liturgical forms, and in other such matters, and to provide this assistance where possible.
  - To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made on further matters of confession, church polity, liturgy, and mission, as per the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
  - To continue discussion when appropriate on existing differences in confession and practice with a particular focus on admission to the Lord's Supper and the supervision of the pulpit.
  - To meet and have contact with the ERQ Interchurch Committee and synods if and when invited.
  - To encourage the churches to continue supporting the ERQ prayerfully, and financially when needed.
  - To encourage the churches to seek out ways and means to develop contacts with individual ERQ churches as is done between Owen Sound and St. Georges.

**Acts of Synod 2010, Article 29**

- To mandate the CCCNA as follows:
  - To continue the relationship of EF with the ERQ under the adopted rules.
  - To share information about the nature and development of its dialogue with the ERQ.

**Acts of Synod 2010, Article 74**

- Denied an appeal regarding the decision to establish EF with the ERQ.

**Acts of Synod 2013, Article 59**

- To thank the Lord for the faithful Reformed witness provided in and by the ERQ;
- To mandate the CCCNA to continue the relationship of EF with the ERQ under the adopted rules, giving particular attention to the matters of supervision of the pulpit, admission to the Lord's table and women deacons (in particular, the ordination of) and to provide an account of its dialogue with the ERQ

**Acts of Synod 2016, Article 59**

- To thank the Lord for the faithful Reformed witness provided in and by the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ);
- To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the ERQ under the adopted rules;
- To involve the fraternal delegates in discussions at synods in such a way as to honour the sister-to-sister-church relationship;
- To encourage the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their

missionary endeavours and special projects.

## **B.7 Report on the CanRC relationship with the Reformed Church in the United States**

### ***Introduction***

The CanRC entered into EF with the RCUS a decision of General Synod Neerlandia, 2001(Art. 59).

### ***Mandate of General Synod Dunnville, 2016 (Art. 60)***

GS Dunnville 2016 mandated the CCCNA to continue the relationship of EF with the RCUS under the adopted rules.

### ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018***

#### **2016:**

- Fraternal delegate attended RCUS 270<sup>th</sup> Synod Bakersfield, CA (May 16 – 19, 2016)
- Met with RCUS ICR committee at NAPARC

#### **2017:**

- Fraternal delegates attended RCUS 271<sup>st</sup> Synod, Kansas City, MO (May 15 – 18, 2017)
- Met with RCUS ICR committee at NAPARC

#### **2018:**

- Fraternal delegates attended RCUS 272<sup>nd</sup> Synod, Golden Valley, MN (May 21 – 24, 2018)
- Met with RCUS ICR committee at NAPARC

### ***Observations:***

- The RCUS president stated in his report that:
  - *The goal of the church, if it is to be faithful to its Lord, must be to build on that one foundation. We do so by faithfully preaching the Word of God and looking to our invincible Savior to bless our labours (Ephesians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 3:11)*
  - *Our beloved Reformed Church in the United States, like Ezra of old, has seen the good hand of God upon us (Ezra 7:6, 9)*
  - *For a relatively small denomination we aggressively pursue both home missions and foreign missions, and are not afraid to challenge our larger sister-churches to greater fidelity*
- The RCUS has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Canadian Reformed Churches in regard to the issues confronting the RCN, a sister church to both church bodies.
- Being able to support the ministries which the RCUS is involved in from a financial perspective has become a fairly major concern.
- There are many small congregations, predominantly rural, with most of the urban works fairly recent.
- There is concern about declining membership in the RCUS. Two congregations were closed last year.
- Opportunities exist to work together on foreign mission projects, especially in the Philippines.
- The RCUS has singled out and very much appreciates the developing relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. They especially appreciate having fraternal delegates attend for a significant portion of the meeting at both the classis and the synod level meetings.

- Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or practices. The important determination is to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture and confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice.
- Based on the rules for EF, the CanRC and the RCUS can effectively assist each other via pulpit exchanges, visiting RCUS churches, participating in youth camps/conferences held by the various churches, and the exchange of articles in magazines supported by church members.

**Recommendations:**

The CCCNA recommends that synod decide:

1. To continue EF with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) under the adopted rules.
2. To mandate the committee to submit its report to the churches five months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

**Brief description of the Reformed Church in the United States**

The present-day Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) is the continuing remnant of the German immigrant denomination of the same name which was founded in 1725 by the Rev. John Philip Boehm. The old RCUS continued as a separate denomination until 1933-34 when the larger part of it united with the Evangelical Synod of North America to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church. This new church merged with the Congregational Christian Churches in 1957 to form the United Church of Christ.

One classis - the Eureka Classis - refused to participate in the 1934 merger. This classis continued as a separate entity for the next five decades. During this time, several congregations of like mind have become part of it. The North Dakota Classis dissolved in 1936 and its ministers and churches joined the Eureka Classis. During the 1950s, congregations at Menno, SD; Manitowoc, WI; Garner, IA; Sutton, NE; and Shafter and Bakersfield, CA, which had either left the Evangelical and Reformed Church or had been independent, joined the Eureka Classis. The 1970s welcomed the arrival of several churches from the General Association of Regular Baptists that had become Reformed. In subsequent years, several groups (some as whole congregations) have left the UCC to join the RCUS. Today, the RCUS numbers about forty congregations.

At its annual meeting in 1986, the Eureka Classis dissolved to form the Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States. Today, instead of one classis, the RCUS consists of four classes: Covenant East, Northern Plains, South Central and Western. Source: [www.rcus.org](http://www.rcus.org)

Source of church data: **Abstract of the Minutes of the 271<sup>st</sup> Synod May 15-18, 2017**

Location	<i>United States of America</i>
Origin(s)	<i>German immigrants to USA in early 1700s</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed Three Forms of Unity</i>
Number of churches & church plants	<i>40 churches &amp; 7 formal church plants</i>
Membership numbers	<i>3,634 members of whom 2,831 are communicant</i>

Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>	40	<i>as needed</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	4	<i>meets annually</i>
	<i>Regional Synod</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
	<i>General Synod</i>	1	<i>meets Annually</i>
Office bearers	<i>Ministers</i>	55*	<i>*41 active and 14 retired or without charge</i>
	<i>Elders</i>	123	
	<i>Deacons</i>	102	
Training of Theological Students	<i>RCUS supports five seminaries: Greenville Presbyterian Theological, Heidelberg, Mid-America, New Geneva, City (guideline: \$2 pcm for each seminary. Note: Heidelberg Seminary is under the oversight of a local RCUS consistory.</i>		

### ***History of the relationship***

The Canadian Reformed Church in Carman had local contact with the RCUS beginning in 1986. This contact was taken over by the General Synod's CRCA (Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad) in 1992. General Synod Neerlandia 2001 extended EF to the RCUS.

### ***General Synod Decisions Relating to the RCUS***

#### **Acts of Synod 1989, Article 45**

- The first mention of the RCUS can be found where the chairman extends a special welcome to Rev. S. Allison but "as a private visitor ... as there are, as yet, no official contacts between us and the RCUS."

#### **Acts of Synod 1992, Article 79**

- The CRCA is mandated to investigate the RCUS with a view to entering into a relationship of EF, making use of the findings of the church at Carman, MB.

#### **Acts of Synod 1995, Article 101**

- The CRCA reported that it had not completed its mandate so GS instructed the CRCA to continue the mandate regarding the RCUS initially given to it by GS 1992.

#### **RCUS 251<sup>st</sup> Synod, 1997**

- letter dated Oct 20, 1997 inviting the Canadian Reformed Churches to enter into fraternal (ecclesiastical) relationship with the RCUS.

#### **Acts of Synod 1998, Article 51**

- GS declines the invitation but gives instruction to the CRCA (now CCCNA)
  - to continue working towards a relationship of EF with the RCUS,
  - to resolve the matter of proper supervision of the Lord's Supper so only those who confess the Reformed faith will be admitted;
  - to discuss the matter of Sunday observance and the doctrine of the church;
  - to seek clarification of the concept of erasure;
  - to investigate the position of the CRCNA among the NAPARC churches.

#### **Acts of Synod 2001, Article 59**

- GS adopts EF with the RCUS but instructs the CCCA to continue discussion on the issues

noted in its Considerations 4.2, 4.4, 4.5

**Acts of Synod 2004, Article 24**

- GS expresses gratitude to the Lord for the positive developments within our contacts with the RCUS and continues EF with the RCUS with the instruction to continue discussions as noted in its Considerations 4.2 - 4.5.
- It also encourages the Classes to continue to development contact with the Classis of the RCUS bordering their area and to churches to pursue actively our EF with the RCUS via pulpit exchanges, visiting RCUS churches, and invitations to youth camps/conferences held by the various churches.

**Acts of Synod 2007, Article 17**

- GS continues EF with the RCUS under the adopted rules for EF. GS states, “ As the CCCA fulfills its mandate according to these rules, matters of concern raised by the churches (see Observations 2.7-2.11) may continue to be raised when appropriate.”
- It also instructs the CCCA to endeavour to meet with the RCUS Interchurch Relations Committee at least once a year.

**Acts of Synod 2010, Article 28**

- GS continues EF with the RCUS under the adopted rules for EF.
- It also instructs the CCCNA to endeavour to meet at least once a year to discuss matters of mutual concern and edification and to share more detailed information with the churches about the nature and the development of its dialogue with the RCUS.

**Acts of Synod 2013, Article 93**

- GS continues EF with the RCUS under the adopted rules for EF.
- It also instructs the CCCNA to endeavour to meet regularly to discuss matters of mutual concern and edification, giving attention to the matters of Lord’s Day observance and admission to the Lord’s table.

**Acts of Synod 2016, Article 60**

- GS continues EF with the RCUS under the adopted rules for EF.

## **B.8 Report on the CanRC relationship with the RPCNA**

### ***Introduction***

The CanRC does not have ecclesiastical fellowship with the RPCNA but is a member of NAPARC together with the RPCNA.

### ***Mandate of General Synod Dunnville 2016 (Art. 90)***

4.1 To express gratitude for the Reformed doctrine and practice evident in the RPCNA, evident through the contact between the CCCNA and the IRC;

4.2 That the CanRC not enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);

4.3 That the CCCNA interact with the RPCNA at NAPARC.

### ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018***

#### **2017:**

- at their invitation, members of CCCNA attended the RPCNA synod in Marion, IN (June, 2017)
- CCCNA and IRC interacted at NAPARC meeting (November, 2017)

#### **2018:**

- at their invitation, members of CCCNA attended the RPCNA synod in Marion, IN (June, 2018)

### ***Observations:***

- The CCCNA has twice recommended to a General Synod that EF be extended to the RPCNA. The recommendation was not adopted at GS 2016 with consideration of two issues. The practice of ordaining female deacons (and the exegetical defense thereof) “remains an impediment to EF between the RPCNA and CanRC” as well as reservations about the place and function of *The Testimony* (GS 2016, Art. 90, Consideration 3.2, 3.3, 3.5).
- GS 2016 does acknowledge that the RPCNA can be recognized for their faithfulness to the Word of God and their strong Reformed convictions (GS 2016, Art. 90, Consideration 3.5, Recommendation 4.1)
- The RPCNA have congregations or preaching points within close proximity to CanRC churches in Ottawa, Elora, Fergus, Guelph and Denver. Several of these have expressed a desire for progression towards unity.
- The CCCNA has attended the last two synods of the RPCNA. These were historic "watershed" moments where, among other matters, the RPCNA defended the scriptural position of men only in the teaching offices and upheld the discipline of a presbytery to suspend a retired professor who advocated opening the teaching offices to women. Several RPCNA brothers noted that the acceptance of women as deacons is on the decline in the federation.

### ***Recommendations:***

The CCCNA recommends that Synod decide:

1. That the CCCNA avail itself of opportunities to interact with the RPCNA such as at the NAPARC to discuss that which hinders EF from being offered to the RPCNA.

- To mandate the committee to submit its report to the churches five months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

***Brief description of the RPCNA***

The RPCNA was established in North America in 1798, having come from the Reformed Presbyterians in Scotland who originated from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The RPCNA is a member both of the ICRC and NAPARC. It has formal fraternal relations (EF) with a number of churches, including these sister churches of the CanRC: Free Church of Scotland (Synod of North America); OPC; RCUS and the URCNA. Its Synod meets annually, the most recent one having been held in June 2018. Further information about the RPCNA may be obtained by visiting its website: [www.reformedpresbyterianchurch.org](http://www.reformedpresbyterianchurch.org).

Source of church data: **NAPARC Report Nov 2017**

Location	<i>North America</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Scottish immigrants to USA in 1798</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Confession of Faith, Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechism, Reformed Presbyterian Testimony</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>98 churches</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>7,076 members of whom 4,886 are communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Session (Consistory)</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>meets monthly</i>
	<i>Presbytery (Classis)</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>meets 2-4x/yr</i>
	<i>Regional Synod</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
	<i>Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>meets annually</i>
Office bearers	<i>Ministers</i>	<i>170</i>	
	<i>Elders</i>	<i>304</i>	
	<i>Deacons</i>	<i>251</i>	
Training of Theological Students	<i>RPCNA sponsors Geneva College and the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania.</i>		

***General Synod Decisions Relating to the RPCNA***

**Acts of Synod 2007, Article 163**

The first report giving a detailed overview of the RPCNA was submitted to Synod (Reports Vol 1, p.196-239).

**Acts of Synod 2010, Article 77**

An investigative report regarding *The Testimony*, women deacons, and exclusive psalmody was submitted to Synod (Reports Vol 1, p.188-222). The committee had recommended inviting the

RPCNA to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship. Synod decided not to enter into EF with the RPCNA at that time.

**Acts of Synod 2013, Article 76**

The CCCNA submitted a much shorter report to Synod along the same lines. (Reports Vol 1, p.193-194). Synod instructed the CCCNA to further investigate the matters of deacons' ordination, and *The Testimony*.

**Acts of Synod 2016, Article 90**

The CCCNA investigated in detail (Observation 2.2, 2.3) the matters of ordained women deacons and *The Testimony* and states that there is nothing to be gained by mandating the committee to study the matters further. It recommended inviting the RPCNA to enter into EF. Synod decided not to enter into EF but did mandate the committee to continue its interaction with the RPCNA.

## C. NAPARC Report

### *Introduction*

NAPARC is a fellowship of thirteen churches based on subscription and adherence to the Bible as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confessional Standards. Its purpose is to facilitate discussion on common issues, to study matters of shared concern, to exercise the promotion of the Reformed faith, and to promote collaboration, where feasible, in works of mission, relief, etc. Any decisions of NAPARC are advisory only, and do not affect the autonomy of member churches.

The CanRC has been a member of NAPARC since 2008. For further information (on constitution and bylaws, meetings, supporting materials, etc.) see the website: [www.naparc.org](http://www.naparc.org).

### *Mandate of GS 2016*

General Synod Dunnville 2016 gave the following mandate to the CCCNA concerning NAPARC: (Acts, art 89, pg. 101)

#### **4. Recommendations:**

4.1 To thank the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) for representing the CanRC at meetings of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC);

4.2 To approve the changes made to the revised constitution and bylaws of NAPARC;

4.3 To mandate the CCCNA:

4.3.1 To continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC and to continue its active involvement in it;

4.3.2 To convey to NAPARC the approval of the changes made to the revised Constitution and Bylaws of NAPARC;

4.2.3 (sic) To raise in discussion at NAPARC, the application of the “Golden Rule’ Comity Agreement” and the “Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations” as a reminder for the Member Churches;

4.2.4 (sic) To assist the local churches when asked about conflicts with the “Golden Rule’ Comity Agreement” and the “Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations”;

4.2.5 (sic) To address NAPARC about a lack of definition for the terms “Member Church” and “Unit Vote” in the revised Constitution of NAPARC.

### *Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2016 to fall 2018*

4.3.1: The Committee participated in the annual meetings held each November in 2016, 2017 and will do so again, D.V. in November 2018. Four delegates (two from sub-committee East and two from sub-committee West) were sent to each meeting, of which the main agenda items included reports of each member church on its synod or general assembly, significant decisions, concerns of theological or practical nature, etc. Discussion and prayer followed each federation’s report. A ‘key-note’ address was provided by an invited speaker, which was followed by discussion. Currently, no other federations are applying for membership in NAPARC. At the invitation of NAPARC, the Protestant Reformed Church and the Bible Presbyterian Church have sent observers the past number of years.

4.3.2: The CCCNA secretary conveyed the decision of GS 2016 to the NAPARC secretary in a letter dated July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

4.2.3: (sic - should be 4.3.3): The committee plans to raise these topics at the plenary session of NAPARC 2018 with the member churches.

4.2.4: (sic - should be 4.3.4) The Committee received one letter seeking advice on the “Golden Rule” Comity Agreement, to which a response was sent. In addition, the Committee sent a letter to Guelph Emmanuel seeking detailed information regarding their concern of the “Golden Rule” Comity Agreement and the Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations” which was directly reflected in the mandate we received by Synod Dunnville. (Art 89: Observation 2.9, Consideration 3.3, Recomm. 4.2.4 Synod Dunnville 2016) Our desire was to discuss this at plenary of CCCNA and if necessary address the “offending” church(es) in a brotherly way at NAPARC. No detailed response was received from Guelph.

4.2.5: (sic - should be 4.3.5) The Committee opines that the terminology used in the constitution and bylaws are understandable and reasonable. As the Committee cited in their report to Synod Dunnville 2016 they found the changes to be an improvement and they could in good conscience support them. Although definitions are lacking it is commonly understood and accepted that each church body (e.g. the federation of the CanRC) is a member of NAPARC and as one member it has one voting unit. This understanding is confirmed on the NAPARC website as it lists its thirteen member churches. In matters of importance there are a total of thirteen votes able to be cast, one “unit vote” by each member. GS 2016, as the broadest assembly of the federation of CanRC decided in favour of the proposed changes to the NAPARC constitution. In general matters during the flow of any meeting each delegate will be allowed a vote. As is recognized in the bylaws a simple majority will pass a recommendation.

### ***Observations***

Re 4.3.1: The CCCNA continues to see the benefit of being involved in NAPARC, both to derive insights from and to contribute to the Reformed witness of it. As member churches we live in a North American society that is increasingly secular and hostile. It is good to support one another and maintain a united front on the major challenges we face. Reports from member-churches are often relevant to developments or projects of the CanRC and it is useful to discuss these out of common interest.

Besides participating in the meeting of NAPARC, the CCCNA has used the occasion to hold meetings with the Inter-church Relations Committees of the ERQ, OPC, RCUS, RPCNA annually and the KPCA (Kosin) triennially. In addition to meeting with the five mentioned churches the CCCNA has been in contact with the three other churches, the HRC, FRCNA and the ARPC.

We see this efficient and economical arrangement as an additional benefit of membership in NAPARC; moreover, we observe a growing bond among those churches in NAPARC with whom we have EF. There is an Interim Committee that prepares the agenda prior to each NAPARC

meeting and looks after other organizational matters. Br Les Vanderveen, chairman of subcommittee West, serves on this committee.

Re 4.3.2: We highlight the following excerpt from the 2013 CCCNA Report the Synod: The “Golden Rule Comity Agreement” was adopted by NAPARC in 1984 following the recommendation of the representatives of the ‘home missions’ (ie., not foreign missions) agencies that member-churches of NAPARC, when planning mission work, be sensitive to the presence of existing congregations and mission-work of other churches. Out of courtesy and for good working relationships, the home missions’ committees are encouraged to inform each other of their planned activities.

“The Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations” was adopted in 1987 to forestall a consistory or presbytery of a member-church from unintentionally receiving into its membership an ordained officer or member who is under discipline, thus creating tension between the churches. Like the Comity Agreement, it is intended to function as a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ for the sake of maintaining good communications, and so, good relations. It has no binding authority upon any member-church of NAPARC.

These agreements are just asking for some sensible contact with neighbouring churches about the establishment of mission posts or the transfer of members. The point is not that we need to “honour” these agreements (in the sense that they are binding upon us), but rather to take them into consideration in contact with NAPARC churches. NAPARC agreements do not supersede our own rules established in the Church Order. The status and implications of the “Golden Rule Comity Agreement” and the Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations” are governed by the NAPARC Constitution and they should be interpreted in its context.”

The above explains the purpose and authority of the agreement. The practical application of these agreements also needs to be addressed. A NAPARC church very active in its backyard will become well known in the neighbourhood and among other NAPARC churches for its mission activities and its level of evangelism work when a mission area is being selected by another NAPARC member church. As part of the annual report each NAPARC church does inform the other NAPARC churches of its mission activities. Of greater concern is the honour and respect for the church’s office of oversight of its members. Although we do not have EF with every NAPARC member church we would be upset if another church did not respect the work of oversight and discipline from our consistory.

The Committee also brings to the attention of Synod that in order for us to adequately fulfill our mandate, for example recommendations 4.3.3 and 4.3.5, it would be most helpful if more information was provided to the committee in order to address the concern(s) raised. We did request, and receive, the material sent to General Synod by the churches via the General Synod archivist.

### ***Considerations***

The Committee considers that it has sufficiently dealt with General Synod 2016 considerations 4.3.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 with the understanding that the CCCNA is always

willing to assist the local churches in regard to NAPARC issues.

### ***Recommendations***

The Committee recommends that Synod decide:

1. To discharge the Committee from the mandate given it by General Synod 2016
2. To mandate the CCCNA to continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC and to continue its active involvement in it.
3. That the CCCNA submit its report to the churches five months prior to the convening of the next General Synod.

### ***Brief description of NAPARC***

#### **Basis:**

Confessing Jesus Christ as only Savior and Sovereign Lord over all of life, we affirm the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts and to its teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms. That the adopted basis of fellowship be regarded as warrant for the establishment of a formal relationship of the nature of the council, that is, a fellowship that enables the constituent churches to advise, council, and cooperate in various matters with one another and hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.

#### **Purpose and Function:**

1. Facilitate discussion and consultation between member bodies on those issues and problems which divide them as well as on those which they face in common and by the sharing of insights “communicate advantages to one another” (*Institutes* IV, 2, 1).
2. Promote the appointment of joint committees to study matters of common interest and concern.
3. Exercise mutual concern in the perpetuation, retention, and propagation of the Reformed faith.
4. Promote cooperation wherever possible and feasible on the local and denominational level in such areas as missions, relief efforts, Christian schools, and church education.

#### **Nature and Extent of Authority**

It is understood that all actions and decisions taken are advisory in character and in no way curtail or restrict the autonomy of the member bodies.

#### **Member Churches:**

1. The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)
2. The Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)
3. The Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ)
4. The Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)
5. The Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)
6. The Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC)
7. The Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA)
8. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
9. The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)

10. The Presbyterian Reformed Church (PresRC)
11. The Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)
12. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)
13. The United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)

### **General Synod Decisions Relating to NAPARC**

#### **Acts of Synod 2001, Article 74**

- To allow the CCCA to send an observer, at its own discretion, to future meetings of NAPARC to investigate its usefulness and possible membership in this organization

#### **Acts of Synod 2004, Article 30**

- To mandate the CCCA to continue to send an observer to NAPARC, with the instruction to initiate discussion on the matters brought forth in Consideration 4.2. (This dealt with significant duplication in the purpose, function, and membership of NAPARC and the ICRC.)

#### **Acts of Synod 2007, Article 140**

- To instruct the CCCA to apply for membership in NAPARC

#### **Acts of Synod 2010, Article 52**

- To continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC
- To investigate the status and implications of the Golden Rule Comity Agreement and the NAPARC Agreement on Transfer of members and Congregations in order to determine whether or not these agreements interfere with the independence of the CanRC in regard to establishing relations of EF with other federations.

#### **Acts of Synod 2013, Article 77**

- To mandate the CCCNA to continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC and to continue its involvement in it;
- To raise in discussion at NAPARC what may be perceived as a tension between Article 4 of the NAPARC constitution on “The Nature and Extent of Authority” and the last sentence of 5.2 on “Membership,” namely “Those churches shall be eligible for membership ... [which] maintain the marks of the true church (re: preaching of the gospel, the Scriptural administration of the sacraments, the faithful exercise of discipline.”)

- **Acts of Synod 2016, Article 89**

- To mandate the CCCNA to continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC and to continue its involvement in it;
- To raise in discussion at NAPARC the application of the “Golden Rule Comity Agreement” and the “Agreement on the Transfer of Members and Congregations” as a reminder for the Member Churches and to assist the local churches when asked about conflicts with these agreements

## **D. Combined Report of the CRCA and CCCNA**

### ***Introduction***

Currently the execution of CanRC Synod decisions with respect to other churches as per CO article 50 is mandated to four committees:

- The CRCA (Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad)
- The CRCA-SRN (CRCA – Subcommittee Relations (churches in the) in the Netherlands)
- The CCCNA (Committee for Contact with Churches in North America)
- The CCU (Coordinators for Church Unity)

These four committees operate independently of each other. This has proven to be inefficient and cumbersome, and at times even problematic.

For example, issues arise in multi-lateral situations such as the ICRC (International Conference of Reformed Churches) and NAPARC (North American Presbyterian And Reformed Council). GS 2016 (Dunnville) acknowledged this implicitly when it mandated the CRCA to consult with other CanRC inter church relations committees about the delegation to the ICRC. The 4-member delegation to the ICRC consisted of 2 CRCA members, 1 CCCNA member, and 1 CRCA-SRN member (though invited, the CCU did not participate). Your committees found the experience good, and the CCCNA decided that the CRCA could delegate someone to a NAPARC meeting. A similar issue arises when there are concurrent broadest assemblies, such as that of the URCNA and OPC in 2018.

Issues also arise, among others, with respect to inconsistency in policies for other bonds of churches (e.g., whom to invite to our general synods) and lack of knowledge regarding the intricacies and sensitivities of relationships with third parties (e.g. the relationship with the GGRC when talking to the URCNA, or with the GKv when talking to the OPC). Recognizing this, the CRCA and CCCNA arranged a meeting of delegations from the CRCA and the CCCNA. That meeting took place on March 1, 2018, via a video conference call. Minutes of that meeting were reported to the CRCA and CCCNA, and has culminated in this report, which is being submitted by the CRCA and CCCNA together to GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel).

### ***History***

GS 1954 (art. 100) created the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad (CCCA)

GS 1962 (art. 226) created a Committee to Write to the Christian Reformed Church (CRCNA) and continued the CCCA.

GS 1965 (art. 216) continued the CCCA and created two further committees, one for Contact with the CRCNA, the other for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). The Committee for Contact with the CRCNA existed for a short while.

GS 1992 (art. 124) continued the CCCA and CC-OPC, and further created a Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU) to represent the CanRC at the Alliance of Reformed Churches (cf. art. 80). GS 1992 (art. 79) mandated the CCCA to investigate the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS).

GS 1995 (art. 118) continued the CCCA, CC-OPC, CPEU, and added a Committee for Contact with the Reformed Church in Quebec (ERQ).

GS 1998 (art. 143), besides continuing the CPEU, reorganized things somewhat by creating two committees: the CRCA (Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad) and the CCCA (*now*: Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas). For the CCCA three subcommittees were

appointed directly by synod: RCUS, ERQ, and OPC.

GS 2001 (art. 98) continued the CRCA, CCCA, and CPEU. Contact with the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) arose via the CRCA, GS 2001 (art. 56) determined it would be the domain of the CCCA. The Synod Acts did not report the appointment of subcommittees.

GS 2004 (art. 116) continued the CRCA, CCCA, and CPEU. The index to the Acts suggest that the CCCA mandate now included mandates for: the Independent Presbyterian Churches in Mexico, the Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America, the ERQ, the OPC, the RCUS, and the IRB, as well as NAPARC.

GS 2007 (art. 174) decided to divide the workload somewhat differently again, by appointing a Committee for Church Unity (CCU), a Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA), and a Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA). The CCCNA was split into a subcommittee East and a subcommittee West.

GS 2010 (art. 60) received a recommendation from the CRCA to consolidate and reorganise inter church relations by disbanding the CRCA and CCCNA and create one Committee on Inter-church Relations. As this recommendation did not include comment from the CCCNA and did not clearly have broad support among the churches the proposal was not adopted. GS 2010 (art. 167) continued the CRCA, CCCNA, and CCU, and created the CRCA–Subcommittee for Contact with Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

### ***Observations***

The CRCA and CCCNA advise that synod include in its observations:

1. The CRCA and CCCNA have provided synod with an overview of the history of inter-church relations as practised by the CanRC since coming into existence.
2. The structural organization of the CanRC interchurch relations committees is as follows.  
The CRCA consists of 6 members, and is currently responsible for 8 EF relations (Australia, New Zealand, Scotland (2), South Africa, Brazil, Indonesia, Korea), the ICRC, plus 3 contacts (2 in Korea, 1 in Indonesia)  
The CCCNA consists of 8 members, and is currently responsible for 3 EF relations (OPC, RCUS, ERQ), NAPARC, plus all NAPARC member churches (URCNA excepted) as contacts  
The CCU consists of 4 members, and is currently responsible for 1 EF relation (URCNA)  
The CRCA-SRN consists of 4 members, and is currently responsible for 1 EF relation (GKv), plus 2 contacts (DGK, GKN).
3. (If synod indeed so decides:) The dissolution of the CRCA-SRN will increase the workload of the CRCA.
4. In the past, committees were put together regionally so that members could meet face to face. However, over the past three years, many committee meetings have made efficient use of digital video conferencing technology.<sup>1</sup> Physical distance between members of a committee is no longer a hindrance in performing committee work.
5. In the run up to GS 2016 (Dunnville) there was lack of clarity over who was should be extending invitations to other churches and what materials their delegates should have access to.

<sup>1</sup> During 2016-2019 the CRCA had one member in Houston, BC, one member in Vernon, BC, and four members in the Fraser Valley. Video conferencing is used for at least one if not two members every meeting.

### ***Considerations***

The CRCA and CCCNA advise that synod include in its considerations:

1. The workload of maintaining relationships and contacts with other churches is irregularly distributed among the various committees.
2. In 2010 the CRCA recommended consolidation and reorganization of the committees. At that time the CCCNA was unaware of this recommendation, which became a reason for not adopting it. This time the request is coming from the CRCA and CCCNA together.
3. The proposal is not to consolidate and reorganize right now. Rather, it is to mandate a study of how CO article 50 can best be executed. The “history” makes clear that thus far the approach has allowed for inconsistencies between the various committees. Thus a study is warranted.
4. There is not just “one right way” to do inter church relations. Reorganizations have occurred previously in 1998 and 2007.
5. Whatever the outcome of this study, there are a number of practical issues that need to be addressed specifically. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, matters relating to inviting other churches to be present at CanRC general synods, the composition of CanRC delegations to multi-church conferences such as the ICRC and NAPARC, and effectively having only one level of relationship (EF); at times a synod has mandated a committee to maintain contact with another church, without working towards EF.
6. The study should result in recommendations as to how the findings of the study might become part of our ecclesiastical regulations (e.g. Church Order, Rules for EF, Synod Guidelines).

### ***Recommendations***

The CRCA and CCCNA recommend that synod decide:

1. To mandate the CanRC inter-church relations committees (CRCA, CCCNA, CRCA-SRN, and CCU<sup>2</sup>):
  - 1.1. to reflect in consultation with each other on CanRC protocols regarding:
    - 1.1.1 Whom to invite as delegates and whom to invite as observers to our general synods;
    - 1.1.2 Who is responsible for extending this invitation;
    - 1.1.3 What are the rights and privileges of delegates and observers during synod; How are they cared for during the time of synod and how can they interact with synod (members)?
    - 1.1.4 What synod materials are delegates and observers respectively entitled to;
    - 1.1.5 Who is responsible for ensuring delegates and observers receive the materials they are entitled to;
    - 1.1.6 How to have CanRC representation at multi-church conferences (e.g. ICRC, NAPARC);
  - 1.2 to recommend how their findings and recommendations as per 1.1 become part of our ecclesiastical regulations;
  - 1.3 to reflect in consultation with each other how the CanRC interchurch relations committees might most effectively and efficiently work together, including but not limited to the following matters:
    - 1.3.1 the flow of information between CanRC inter-church relations committees;
    - 1.3.2 cooperation between CanRC inter-church relations committees;

<sup>2</sup> In the event the CCU and/or CRCA-SRN is/are discontinued, it/they can be removed.

- 1.3.3 the pros and cons of consolidating and reorganizing all inter-church relations committees into one, taking into consideration reflection on this in the past;
- 1.3.4 the pros and cons of maintaining different types of relationships;
- 1.4 to report on their findings as per 1.3 and to make recommendations to the churches in relation to their findings;
- 1.5 to submit their report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

8.2.4 Committee for Church Unity (CCU)

# REPORT OF THE COORDINATORS FOR THE COMMITTEE FOR CHURCH UNITY (CCU)

**To: General Synod Edmonton-Immanuel 2019**

Esteemed brothers,

## **Mandate**

General Synod Dunnville 2016 decided the following:

To reappoint the CCU-C, adding two additional coordinators, and mandating them:

1. To seek ways to facilitate the work of building unity on the local level, as well as visiting churches and classes of the URCNA, particularly in the United States;
2. To discuss with CERCU how to make progress towards federative unity should Synod Wyoming mandate CERCU to pursue this;
3. To monitor any developments in the URCNA with respect to ‘doctrinal affirmations.’  
(*Acts of General Synod Dunnville 2016, Article 77*)

## **Activities**

1. On June 1, 2016, Rev. W. den Hollander and Rev. C.J. VanderVelde attended a breakfast meeting consisting of Niagara-area CanRC and URCNA ministers in Jordan, Ontario to discuss the decisions of Synod Dunnville 2016 pertaining to unity efforts as well as to discuss what was on the agenda of Synod Wyoming 2016 of the URCNA pertaining to unity efforts. We discussed navigating impasses and envisioning a future.
2. Rev. den Hollander and Rev. VanderVelde attended a few days of Synod Wyoming 2016, which was held from June 14-17, 2016 in Wyoming, Michigan. Rev. VanderVelde brought fraternal greetings on behalf of the CanRC; see appendix #1 for the address. See appendix #2 for an article published in *Clarion* about Synod Wyoming.
3. The four coordinators met for the first time after Synod Dunnville 2016 on September 9, 2016 for a meeting together at Binbrook, Ontario. At this meeting, we reviewed our mandate as coordinators for the CCU, as given by Synod Dunnville 2016. We also reviewed the decisions of Synod Wyoming 2016 and how they impact our work as coordinators. Moreover, we discussed how to deal with invitations from URCNA Classes to send a fraternal delegate to their Classes. We decided that if invited we would ask whether there would be opportunity to engage the matter of church unity in some kind of formal way at Classis so that our visit as coordinators would be worthwhile and within the framework of our mandate as coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity. Otherwise it can best be left to an area CanRC Classis to send a fraternal delegate to bring greetings. We decided that we would not go merely to bring greetings. We also agreed that we do not want to take away the role of area CanRC Classes in having contact with URCNA Classes. Furthermore, we discussed what points to raise in our meeting

with CERCU at the NAPARC meeting to be held on Nov 8-10 at Pompton Plains, NJ. Finally, we discussed the letter received from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) about facilitating communication between the various inter-church relations committees functioning within the CanRC.

4. Rev. VanderVelde attended Classis Southwestern Ontario Sept 21, 2016, held at Sheffield, Ontario, as a fraternal delegate from Classis Central Ontario and used the opportunity to also bring greetings from the entire federation as a coordinator for the CCU.
5. Several of the coordinators had opportunity to fill the pulpit in URCNA churches far from home, and even to serve in an interim ministry in a URCNA congregation. Rev. Slomp travelled to PEI to fill the pulpit on June 19 and 26, 2016, and to Abbotsford, BC to fill the pulpit on July 3 and 10, 2016. Rev. den Hollander served as interim minister at PEI from Sept 15-Oct 24, 2016, performing many of the regular ministerial duties, including preaching, attending Council meetings, and providing pastoral care.
6. All four coordinators travelled to Pompton Plains, New Jersey for a meeting with CERCU on Nov 9, 2016 held in conjunction with NAPARC. This was the first meeting with our counterparts after Synod Dunnville 2016 of the CanRC and Synod Wyoming 2016 of the URCNA, and served as an opportunity to introduce the two new coordinators – Rev. Pol and Rev. Slomp – to CERCU as well as to discuss together the decisions of these two Synods as they relate to our efforts toward church unity. We raised the following points. (1) We indicated that we have a mandate from Synod Dunnville 2016 to pursue church unity with the URCNA and asked whether CERCU would be willing to help us carry out our mandate. Since Synod Wyoming 2016 still did encourage the Classes and churches to continue to engage the matter of church unity, we asked whether the CERCU reps of the various Classes would help us come to the various Classes and churches to address the matter of church unity. We indicated that as coordinators for church unity we would not come to Classes only to deliver fraternal greetings, but we would come if there would be opportunity on the agenda to engage the matter of church unity in some kind of formal way so that our visit as coordinators would be worthwhile and within the framework of our mandate as coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity; we indicated that otherwise it would be best if an area CanRC Classis would send a fraternal delegate to bring greetings. This was received well by the members of CERCU, and they would present this in their reports as liaisons to their respective Classes. (2) We inquired about the possibility of coordinating pulpit exchanges between CanRC ministers and URCNA churches in areas where there are no local CanRC churches. This idea too was received well by the members of CERCU, and they would present this in their reports as liaisons to their respective Classes. (3) We asked once again whether a colloquium on Reformed church polity could be held at a subsequent URCNA Synod, considering that the colloquium on the covenant held at Synod Visalia 2014 was so successful in clearing up misconceptions. The members of CERCU did not support the suggested colloquium on church polity since they thought that the matter of church polity was still too controversial among the URCNA and it would be counterproductive for the pursuit of unity. (4) We raised the matter of damage done to the CanRC reputation by the charge of “hierarchy” levelled against CanRC church polity as reflected in the criticisms of the PJCO in, for example, the overture from Classis Pacific Northwest against the PJCO which went to Synod Wyoming 2016. We asked

whether CERCU would be willing to help clear our name in this matter and undo the damage to our reputation. (5) We presented a copy of the *Acts* of Synod Dunnville 2016 to CERCU.

7. We did not meet with CERCU at the occasion of the 2017 NAPARC meetings because CERCU was pressed for time due to various meetings with different denominations while at NAPARC, and because we mutually agreed that there were not enough substantial things to discuss at that time which would warrant the expense of travelling there.
8. Rev. W. den Hollander and Rev. W.B. Slomp represented the CanRC as fraternal delegates at Synod Wheaton 2018 of the URCNA held June 11-15, 2018 in Wheaton, Illinois. They were there for the duration of Synod Wheaton. Rev. Slomp delivered fraternal greetings to Synod on behalf of the CanRC; see appendix #3 for the address.
9. On August 2, 2018, Rev. den Hollander and Rev. VanderVelde met over breakfast with Rev. John Bouwers and Rev. Steve Swets, both members of the URCNA's CERCU, at their invitation. The discussion focused on how best to move forward in our relationship as churches. Rev. den Hollander and Rev. VanderVelde expressed the willingness of the CCU to meet with the entire CERCU at the occasion of the upcoming NAPARC in Philadelphia, PA in November 2018.
10. At the time of writing this report, Rev. W. den Hollander and Rev. W.B. Slomp were scheduled to meet with CERCU at the occasion of the upcoming NAPARC meeting at Philadelphia in November 2018.

## **Other Developments**

Classis Manitoba of the CanRC was held concurrently with Classis Central US of the URCNA on April 3-4, 2017 at Christ Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Most of the important parts of the respective Classes were conducted in joint session. Each Classis also met separately to deal with other points on the agenda. This was the first time in the history of the CanRC and URCNA relationship that such an event took place. It is another step forward in our relationship.

Classis Niagara of the CanRC also did something similar with Classis Ontario-East of the URCNA on March 8, 2018 when both Classes followed each other and were held at the same place so that delegates to each Classis could witness the proceedings of the other. This was done in the Wellandport URC building.

A concurrent Classis was scheduled to be held on September 19, 2018 between Classis Ontario West of the CanRC and Classis Southwestern Ontario of the URCNA, but this was postponed for another time because of serious internal matters on the agenda of Classis Ontario West of the CanRC.

## Synod Wyoming 2016 on Unity Matters

There were three important overtures on the agenda of Synod Wyoming 2016 in relation to unity efforts. In one way or another, these overtures would significantly slow down the unity process, if not halt it altogether for the foreseeable future.

First, Synod dealt with an overture from Classis Central US April 13-14, 2015 seeking to change the mandate of CERCU. The mandate of CERCU currently reads: “With a view toward complete church unity, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian federations selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order.” The overture proposed that it read: “With a desire to pursue a broader unity with churches that share a common confession and faith, and acknowledging the desirability of union with churches of like faith and practice, where feasible, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian federations selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order.” In explanation, Ground #6 stated: “The current terminology *‘With a view toward complete church unity...’* appears to be used by the committee in a way which seems to keep driving toward organic union with the Canadian Reformed Churches without recognizing differences in like-faith, like-practice and the desire of churches in our federation to acknowledge them as a true church but not proceed further at this point.”

Synod Wyoming 2016 decided not to accede to this overture. One of the grounds is that “While appreciating the concerns raised by the overture, the current language of ‘with a view toward complete unity’ has provided encouragement in our ecumenical pursuit which has borne good fruit.” Another ground reads, “Some of the grounds of the overture argue against an application of the mandate rather than against the mandate itself and do not, therefore, necessitate changing the mandate.” And finally, “Recent recommendations by CERCU concerning the CanRC demonstrate sensitivity to the concerns outlined in the overture” (Article 37).

Second, Synod dealt with an overture from Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 asking Synod “...to declare that the Proposed Joint Church Order (a church order proposed for use in the prospective union of the United Reformed Churches with the Canadian Reformed Churches) is unusable for that purpose.” The overture asserted that the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) “vacates” a principle held dear by the URCNA, namely, that authority in Christ’s church resides with the local eldership and not broader assemblies. The overture maintained that this principle is violated by such stipulations as having to maintain a seminary, licensure by Classis, counselors appointed for vacant churches by Classis, the role of deputies of Regional Synod, having Regional Synods, admission to the pulpit, etc.

In dealing with this overture, Synod Wyoming 2016 decided to “...declare that the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) is in need of further revision in order to comply more fully with our Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government.” Three grounds are adduced. The first ground is: “This is evidenced by many overtures requesting changes to the

PJCO.” The second ground is: “Several requirements in the PJCO conflict with Principle 5, such as synodically approved hymns, synodical deputies, classical approval for table fellowship and pulpit exchanges, and the calling of ministers requiring approval from other churches.” The third ground is: “There is still significant concern in our churches about the hierarchical tendencies of a federational seminary” (Article 44).

In addition, regarding the PJCO, Synod Wyoming 2016 decided that “...this further revision be undertaken when the federation is ready to enter into Phase 3A with the Canadian Reformed Churches.” And for that reason, Synod Wyoming decided “...to dismiss the PJCO Committee with thanks, including all past members who have worked so diligently” (Article 44).

Third, Synod dealt with an overture from Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 “...to direct CERCUC to discontinue all further action, advancement, processes, efforts or steps towards unification with the Canadian Reformed Churches and specifically advancement to Phase 3, Step A.” Synod Wyoming 2016 unanimously decided not to accede to this overture. One of the grounds is that “CERCUC has responded to the concerns of the overture by deciding to not make a Phase Three, Step A recommendation for at least six years.” Another ground is that “Synod has approved the work of CERCUC, including its synodical reports in which an affirmative case for pursuing union has been made.” Yet another ground is that “The overture is inconsistent with our commitment as a member of NAPARC in which we agree with ‘the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.’” And still another ground is that “The communications received by synod on this issue speak against Overture 13 and articulate the fruit the churches have experienced through the pursuit of unity with the CanRC” (Article 54).

In evaluating Synod Wyoming 2016’s decisions on these matters, we note that things could have been worse but things could also have been better. Thankfully, the mandate of CERCUC remains as it was and still includes the phrase “with a view toward complete church unity.” The mandate of CERCUC still articulates the vision in a clear and strong manner. We can also be thankful that Synod Wyoming unanimously defeated the overture to discontinue all action and efforts towards unification with the CanRC. Instead, there is a breather of at least six years before CERCUC recommends stepping forward to Phase 3A, leading to merger. We should note, however, that this is to be a period of “at least” six years -- meaning that six years is the minimum -- and this language suggests that it may very well be longer.

Synod Wyoming did decide – as was also decided by at least the past two Synods – “...to encourage each classis and consistory to continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCNA...” in various ways, such as pulpit exchanges and seeking dialogue regarding outstanding areas of concern (Article 55). For this too, we can be thankful.

Regarding the PJCO, we can be thankful that Synod Wyoming did not declare it to be “unusable” – as the overture requested – but that Synod took the hard edge off the overture by deciding that it “is in need of further revision.” However, the fundamental concern remains, namely, that aspects of the PJCO are thought to “conflict” with the Reformed principle for church government that authority resides with the local consistory. This is a disappointing conclusion and shows that we are far away from agreement on some church polity matters.

In addition, the PJCO committee – the only committee left of the ones established back in 2001 – has now been dismissed also. There is no longer a Songbook Committee, a Theological Education Committee, and a PJCO Committee. Without any committees left to discuss the issues, most likely the six or more years of breather will not be very productive in overcoming the obstacles to merger. Since Synod London 2010, every successive URCNA Synod has taken steam out of the merger efforts: all committees were gradually dismissed, it was decided to work with the OPC on a common songbook rather than with the CanRC, a decision was made to “table indefinitely” any encouragement for CERCU to move toward proposing to enter Phase 3A, and it was decided to have a breather of at least six years before CERCU makes a Phase 3A recommendation. It is hard not to be discouraged by all these developments.

Although we can be disappointed that the CanRC-URCNA relationship has taken several steps backwards as far as committee work is concerned, we can be thankful that the less formal aspects of the unity pursuit continued to take steps forward. CanRC-URCNA brothers and sisters are involved with one another and working together at the local level in many places as evident, for example, from coordinated youth events, Christian education, outreach efforts, and concurrent Classes taking place. In many places, we steadily have been getting to know one another better and there has been much mutual encouragement. We can continue to build on these relationships locally into the future, and we can hope and pray that the LORD will bless this with greater unity.

### **Synod Wyoming 2016 on Other Matters**

Synod Wyoming 2016 unanimously adopted the proposed hymns to be the hymn portion of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. Synod Visalia 2014 had already adopted the Psalm section. The proposed hymns for the hymn section were already approved at the Orthodox Presbyterian Church’s (OPC) 2016 General Assembly. This means that the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* – a combined effort between the OPC and the URCNA – is ready to be published (Article 46). [It has since been published in 2018.]

With respect to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN), Synod Wyoming 2016 agreed with the recommendation of the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) and decided to remain in Ecumenical Contact (Phase One) of ecumenical relations. Synod Wyoming decided to enter into Ecumenical Contact (Phase One) with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI-NTT) and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA). Synod Wyoming decided to enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (EF) (Phase Two) with the Calvinistic Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC-NTT) and the Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCC) (Article 38).

Interestingly, Synod Wyoming also agreed with the recommendation of CECCA and decided by a fairly close margin of votes to enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase Two) with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA). This generated some discussion because the GKSA have women deacons, although a recent Synod of the GKSA “...confirmed by a substantial majority their practice of prohibiting women from the offices of Elder and Minister.

This reflects their Scriptural conviction that women should not participate in the governing body of the church.” In the GKSA, deacons are not part of the ruling body of the church. The discussion was partly generated by the fact that the GKSA is still in fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), although “...the GKSA continues to give a clear witness to the CRCNA regarding matters relating to the authority of Scripture, including the prohibition against ordaining women into the teaching and ruling offices of the church” (Article 38 and 41).

Decisions by Synod Wyoming to enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase Two) must be ratified by a majority of consistories by December 31, 2016 in order to go into effect. [The decisions to enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase Two) with the GGRC-NTT, the FCC, and the GKSA were ratified by the churches.]

## **Synod Wheaton 2018 of the URCNA held at Wheaton College, Ill, from June 11-15, 2018**

### **Church Unity and Other Matters**

Synod Wheaton 2018 of the URCNA met concurrently with the general Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, with common devotional times and several joint gatherings. Throughout these meetings all songs were selected from the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (TPH), produced as a joint venture of the music committees of the URCNA and the OPC. In the combined meeting on Tuesday evening, this TPH was presented, received joyfully, and the churches of both the URCNA and the OPC were encouraged to make use of it. Regarding this TPH, Synod decided to allocate funds to create a digital version of the songbook to be published on the web and to develop a mobile app, as well as electronic versions of the liturgical forms, prayers, creeds, and confessions, and create a mobile app of the creeds and confessions.

In its dealings with the Report submitted to Synod by the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU), Synod adopted a number of recommendations. Among them Synod “encouraged local churches and classes to take advantage of the opportunity presented with the Canadian Reformed Committee for Church Unity being supplemented with more members who can help answer questions, speak at local churches and at classes, and promote the unity of our churches.”

Throughout the duration of Synod Wheaton the fraternal delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Rev. William den Hollander and Rev. Willem B. Slomp, were received warmly, were invited to engage in all Advisory Committee deliberations, and received the privilege of the floor. The address by Rev. W.B. Slomp (see Appendix #3) was well-received, as expressed by many a delegate in personal conversations. Although the attention for the pursuit of unity with the CanRC is going through a time of “breather,” the reception, interaction, and personal conversations testified to a continued (and with some, growing) appreciation and expression of unity!

In other matters, we note that Synod Wheaton entered into Ecumenical Contact (Phase 1) with the African Evangelical Presbyterian Church, as well as entering into Ecumenical

Fellowship (Phase 2) with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW). Synod also decided to discontinue the relationship of Ecumenical Contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv/RCN) due to the decision to open all offices in the church to women, regardless of many and repeated admonitions.

Synod Wheaton, at different times, gave much attention to the work of missions (both domestic and foreign), executed by the respective federations of churches. They did so in a colloquium to review the history of missions, recounting the activities of missions. They also received a variety of reports and presentations of domestic and foreign missionaries. Synod mandated the federation's Mission Committee to investigate the current OPC model and the older CRC model (including financing) for their missionary endeavours, to see if they are feasible for the URCNA in their missionary endeavours. Synod re-appointed Rev. Richard Bout as the Missions Coordinator. After much deliberation, Synod voted not to create two Missions Coordinator positions – foreign and domestic – choosing to retain one position of Missions Coordinator. At the conclusion of Synod, Friday afternoon, Synod set aside a full hour to discuss matters related to missions. The Missions Committee requested feedback from the churches how best to move forward as a federation.

Synod Wheaton received several overtures indicating a strong desire to have Synod make a clear statement concerning the institution of marriage. Synod adopted without dissent the “Affirmations Regarding Marriage” as a Doctrinal Affirmation. These affirmations will be published on the federational website, as well as made available to those who request it from the Stated Clerk (Rev. Ralph Pontier, who was re-appointed in that position).

## **Doctrinal Affirmations**

Synod Wheaton 2018 adopted without dissent “Affirmations Regarding Marriage,” which faithfully outline in sixteen points the Biblical teaching on marriage. This document is available on the website of the URCNA.

No other doctrinal affirmations were adopted since our report to Synod Dunnville 2016.

## **Considerations**

We have many things to be thankful for when considering the relationship between the CanRC and the URCNA. In many places there is cooperation in evangelism, youth activities, education, and conferences. There are pulpit exchanges, joint worship services, concurrent Classes, interim ministries by CanRC ministers in URCNA churches, and ministers and candidates are being called across federational lines. We thank the LORD for all these blessings. At the same time, it is clear that the process toward merger has slowed down considerably.

We would like Synod Edmonton-Immanuel 2019 to consider the following with a view to disbanding the Committee for Church Unity (CCU) – including the coordinators, the sub-

committees, and related committees – and handing the URCNA portfolio over to the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA).

1. Synod Wyoming 2016 decided to enter a breather of at least six years, during which CERCU will not propose entering into Phase 3A with the CanRC, leading to merger. In its report to Synod Wheaton 2018, CERCU wrote the following: “Given this commitment, our interaction as CERCU with our Canadian Reformed counterparts has been reduced at the committee level. As matters stand, it appears to us that a Phase Three, Step A recommendation would also be unlikely by Synod 2022. Of course, the Lord’s ways are not our ways, but we believe much would have to change before we could be confident of our churches’ readiness and willingness to take the next step on the path toward church union with the Canadian Reformed Churches. While we do see it as our task to encourage and assist the churches in the pursuit of our ecumenical calling toward greater unity, we have also become convinced through our years of engagement together that such unity must finally be given by God in a way that is clear to all the churches. As such, when the churches are ready and enthusiastic about moving forward, we believe such a recommendation should come from the churches” (*Provisional Agenda*, p. 138). This means that there will be four more years of breather, and probably longer. It is also noteworthy that the CERCU report says that the initiative to move along in the unity process in a formal way will have to come from the local churches – which suggests that things are not likely to happen soon.
2. All URCNA sub-committees created to work toward church unity have been disbanded for some time already, with the last committee disbanded by Synod Wyoming 2016. Our sub-committees and related committees have no counterparts with whom to discuss.
3. In the past two years since Synod Wyoming 2016, we as coordinators for the CCU have been largely idle, in the sense that invitations to come to churches and Classes of the URCNA for presentations have not been forthcoming.
4. Giving the URCNA portfolio to the CCCNA will take pressure off the URCNA in the sense that whatever talks will take place within that context will not have the pressure of being conducted by a CanRC committee created to achieve organic unity. In the end, this may prove to be beneficial to progress in our relationship as churches. The CCCNA can deal with the URCNA as a federation with which we are in Ecclesiastical Fellowship, and can raise the matter of church unity as the occasion warrants.
5. The URCNA never had a special committee devoted to the unity efforts with the CanRC, while the CanRC did have a special committee devoted to the unity efforts with the URCNA. Handing the URCNA portfolio to the CCCNA levels the playing field.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend:

1. That Synod Edmonton-Immanuel 2019 decide that the Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity have completed their mandate given by Synod Dunnville 2016 to seek ways to facilitate the work of building unity on the local level, as well as visiting churches and Classes of the URCNA, particularly in the United States.

2. That Synod Edmonton-Immanuel 2019 decide that the Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity have completed their mandate given by Synod Dunnville 2016 to discuss with CERCU how to make progress towards federative unity should Synod Wyoming mandate CERCU to pursue this.
3. That Synod Edmonton-Immanuel 2019 decide that the Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity have completed their mandate given by Synod Dunnville 2016 to monitor any developments in the URCNA with respect to ‘doctrinal affirmations.’
4. That Synod Edmonton-Immanuel 2019 decide to disband the Committee for Church Unity (CCU) – including the coordinators, the sub-committees, and related committees (Church Order, Theological Education, Common Songbook, and Creeds and Forms) – and to hand the URCNA portfolio over to the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA).
5. That if Synod Edmonton-Immanuel 2019 decides to maintain the Committee for Church Unity (CCU), Synod note that, after having served on the committee for nine years, Rev. William den Hollander and Rev. Clarence VanderVelde do not wish to be reappointed to the committee. There is no end-of-term date for any CCU members, but nine years is the usual term for other committees and Rev. den Hollander and Rev. VanderVelde would like to have that applied to them.

Respectfully submitted, with brotherly greetings,

Rev. William den Hollander  
Rev. Dr. Andrew J. Pol  
Rev. Willem B. Slomp  
Rev. Clarence J. VanderVelde  
Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity (CCU)

## **Appendix #1**

### **Fraternal Greetings by Rev. C.J. VanderVelde to Synod Wyoming 2016**

Dear brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

It’s a privilege and pleasure to once again be among you as you gather for another synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URNCA). My colleague Rev. William den Hollander and I are here to bring you greetings from the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). May God bless you in all your deliberations and decisions. May you seek his will in everything on the agenda.

First a little bit about what has transpired in the CanRC federation since we brought fraternal greetings at your last synod. The CanRC also had a general synod recently – in May 2016 at Dunnville, Ontario. Lasting nine days, it was our shortest general synod in recent times.

Several important decisions were made at Synod Dunnville 2016. Over the last 40 years there has been discussion in the CanRC about women voting in the churches. Synod 2010 decided to leave it in the freedom of the local churches. Synod 2013 overturned that decision and said that women should not vote in the churches. Synod 2016 decided to go back to the decision of 2010 to leave it in the freedom of the local churches. This topic has generated much discussion in our churches, and the last two synods received many appeals about this matter. Hopefully the churches can be at peace with Synod 2016's decision to leave it in the freedom of the local churches.

Another notable decision of Synod Dunnville 2016 is the decision pertaining to our Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN). Over the last number of years, we have been concerned about the direction of the RCN. Concerns about hermeneutics – as manifested at the federational seminary in Kampen as well as in discussions about the role of women in the churches -- led Synod 2013 to write a letter of admonition to the RCN. Since there was no change in course, Synod Dunnville 2016 decided to suspend temporarily several of the privileges associated with EF. Members of the RCN seeking membership in the CanRC and guests visiting the CanRC will no longer be admitted to the Lord's Supper simply on the basis of an attestation from their home church. In order to safeguard soundness in doctrine and life, ministers within the RCN can now only be called by a local CanRC church with the concurring advice of classis. Consistories are urged to exercise careful diligence before allowing visiting RCN ministers into the pulpit. The CanRC still have EF with the RCN, but the suspension of these two rules for EF -- pertaining to admission to the Lord's Supper and access to the pulpit -- indicates that the relationship is under strain. The committee dealing with issues surrounding the RCN was mandated to give special attention to the question whether or not to continue EF with the RCN when reporting to our Synod 2019. These are difficult and painful decisions for the CanRC since the RCN is the federation from which the CanRC originated in the post-World War II immigration to Canada. We know that the URCNA are also concerned about the direction of the RCN and have been hesitant to move toward EF with the RCN. Let us together pray that the RCN may turn from their course and abide by the Word of God.

Turning our attention to the unity efforts between the CanRC and the URCNA, we realize that there are some very significant overtures about this on the agenda of Synod Wyoming 2016. In one way or another, these overtures are about significantly slowing down the unity process, if not halting it altogether for the foreseeable future.

As we look back over the years, we realize that the process toward merger between the CanRC and the URCNA has been very slow, but we also realize that there has been a gradual but steady movement toward one another. The colloquium at Synod Visalia 2014 on the doctrine of the covenant and the conclusion that there are no significant differences in covenant views between the CanRC and the URCNA was another important step on that road. Our increasing contact as Coordinators for Church Unity with churches and classes in the USA has built relationships and deepened awareness of the CanRC. We have visited all of the classes in the USA. We hope and pray that there will be more opportunities to build on the progress made.

Therefore, much depends on what Synod Wyoming 2016 will decide with respect to these overtures. May the vision of Synod Escondido 2001 -- which set this unity process in motion -- not be lost. May these overtures be an opportunity to do some deep soul-searching regarding the ecumenical imperative of Scripture. We all preach a gospel of reconciliation and fellowship between God and sinners saved by God's grace. Shouldn't this same gospel of reconciliation and fellowship be a motivating factor for a drive toward organic unity between church federations which share this gospel? What are we indicating to the world when our two federations which are so similar in faith, practice, and history can't get it together in a unity process? Wouldn't a determined and persistent pursuit of unity resulting in a merger be honouring to the Head of the church?

I would like to quote from the Press Release of Synod Dunnville 2016. It says the following about the unity efforts: "In regard to the merger process with the United Reformed Churches of [sic] North America, Synod recognized that the work has proceeded more slowly than was originally expected when Synod Neerlandia 2001 initiated the process toward merger. Synod also took note of voices within the URCNA calling for a complete halt to the merger process. Nonetheless, Synod reappointed coordinators for the work of promoting unity with the URCNA and, in view of the workload and the importance of the issues at stake, even increased their number from two to four. In this way, our churches have said very clearly that we want to continue the unity process. We desire our present relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship to become one of ecclesiastical unity. We feel this is a matter of Christian love and obligation."

In its report to Synod Wyoming 2016, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) states that it will not make any recommendation to step forward to the next phase of relations with the CanRC for at least the next six years. We recognize that it may be necessary to have such a breather for the long-term well-being of unity efforts, but we also appreciate that CERCU is suggesting a general time frame. This is important so that the whole endeavor does not end up off the radar screen. We also appreciate CERCU's recommendation of "the patient pursuit of unity" and CERCU's commitment to assist churches in overcoming what they consider to be obstacles to merger. If there is to be a breather, let the years be filled with positive activity intended to solidify and cultivate the existing relationship.

The four Coordinators for Church Unity – Rev. William den Hollander, Rev. Dr. Andrew Pol, Rev. Bill Slomp, and myself – are willing and ready to come to any classis or local church to help overcome obstacles to merger. Our Synod Dunnville 2016 also kept in existence the various subcommittees for church unity. If Synod Wyoming 2016 would decide to reinstate subcommittees with a view to continuing the discussions without the pressure of moving to the next phase of relations in the near future, our subcommittees would be willing and ready to enter upon such discussions.

May all your deliberations and decisions be to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church!

## Appendix #2 *Clarion* Article

### Synod Wyoming 2016 of the URCNA

By Rev. Clarence J. VanderVelde  
Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington/Waterdown

Synod Wyoming of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) was held from June 14-17 at Wyoming, Michigan. Rev. W. den Hollander and I attended as fraternal delegates on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and I addressed the assembly on behalf of our churches. The address has been included elsewhere in this issue of *Clarion*. What follows is an account of decisions pertaining to unity matters as well as some other matters.

#### Unity Matters

There were three important overtures on the agenda of Synod Wyoming 2016 in relation to unity efforts. In one way or another, these overtures would significantly slow down the unity process, if not halt it altogether for the foreseeable future.

First, Synod dealt with an overture from Classis Central US April 13-14, 2015 seeking to change the mandate of CERCUC. The mandate of CERCUC currently reads: "With a view toward complete church unity, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian federations selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order." The overture proposed that it read: "With a desire to pursue a broader unity with churches that share a common confession and faith, and acknowledging the desirability of union with churches of like faith and practice, where feasible, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian federations selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order." In explanation, Ground #6 stated: "The current terminology *'With a view toward complete church unity...'* appears to be used by the committee in a way which seems to keep driving toward organic union with the Canadian Reformed Churches without recognizing differences in like-faith, like-practice and the desire of churches in our federation to acknowledge them as a true church but not proceed further at this point."

Synod Wyoming 2016 decided not to accede to this overture. One of the grounds is that "While appreciating the concerns raised by the overture, the current language of 'with a view toward complete unity' has provided encouragement in our ecumenical pursuit which has borne good fruit." Another ground reads, "Some of the grounds of the overture argue against an application of the mandate rather than against the mandate itself and do not, therefore, necessitate changing the mandate." And finally, "Recent recommendations by CERCUC concerning the CanRC demonstrate sensitivity to the concerns outlined in the overture" (Article 37).

Second, Synod dealt with an overture from Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 asking Synod "...to declare that the Proposed Joint Church Order (a church order proposed for use in the prospective union of the United Reformed Churches with the Canadian Reformed Churches) is unusable for that purpose." The overture asserted that the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) "vacates" a principle held dear by the URCNA, namely, that authority in Christ's church resides with the local eldership and not broader assemblies. The overture maintained that this principle is violated by such stipulations as having to maintain a seminary, licensure by Classis, counselors appointed for vacant churches by Classis, the role of deputies of Regional Synod, having Regional Synods, admission to the pulpit, etc.

In dealing with this overture, Synod Wyoming 2016 decided to "...declare that the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) is in need of further revision in order to comply more fully with our Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government." Three grounds are adduced. The first ground is: "This is evidenced by many overtures requesting changes to the PJCO." The second ground is: "Several requirements in the PJCO conflict with Principle 5, such as synodically approved hymns, synodical deputies, classical approval for table fellowship and pulpit exchanges, and the calling of ministers requiring approval from other churches." The third ground is: "There is still significant concern in our churches about the hierarchical tendencies of a federational seminary" (Article 44).

In addition, regarding the PJCO, Synod Wyoming 2016 decided that "...this further revision be undertaken when the federation is ready to enter into Phase 3A with the Canadian Reformed Churches." And for that reason, Synod Wyoming decided "...to dismiss the PJCO Committee with thanks, including all past members who have worked so diligently" (Article 44).

Third, Synod dealt with an overture from Classis Pacific Northwest October 14-15, 2014 "...to direct CERCU to discontinue all further action, advancement, processes, efforts or steps towards unification with the Canadian Reformed Churches and specifically advancement to Phase 3, Step A." Synod Wyoming 2016 unanimously decided not to accede to this overture. One of the grounds is that "CERCU has responded to the concerns of the overture by deciding to not make a Phase Three, Step A recommendation for at least six years." Another ground is that "Synod has approved the work of CERCU, including its synodical reports in which an affirmative case for pursuing union has been made." Yet another ground is that "The overture is inconsistent with our commitment as a member of NAPARC in which we agree with 'the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.'" And still another ground is that "The communications received by synod on this issue speak against Overture 13 and articulate the fruit the churches have experienced through the pursuit of unity with the CanRC" (Article 54).

In evaluating Synod Wyoming 2016's decisions on these matters, we note that things could have been worse but things could also have been better. Thankfully, the mandate of CERCU remains as it was and still includes the phrase "with a view toward complete church unity." The mandate of CERCU still articulates the vision in a clear and strong manner. We can also be thankful that Synod Wyoming unanimously defeated the overture to discontinue all action and efforts towards unification with the CanRC. Instead, there is a breather of at least six years before CERCU recommends stepping forward to Phase 3A, leading to merger. We should

note, however, that this is to be a period of “at least” six years -- meaning that six years is the minimum -- and this language suggests that it may very well be longer.

Synod Wyoming did decide – as was also decided by at least the past two Synods – “...to encourage each classis and consistory to continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCNA...” in various ways, such as pulpit exchanges and seeking dialogue regarding outstanding areas of concern (Article 55). For this too, we can be thankful.

Regarding the PJCO, we can be thankful that Synod Wyoming did not declare it to be “unusable” – as the overture requested – but that Synod took the hard edge off the overture by deciding that it “is in need of further revision.” However, the fundamental concern remains, namely, that aspects of the PJCO are thought to “conflict” with the Reformed principle for church government that authority resides with the local consistory. This is a disappointing conclusion and shows that we are far away from agreement on some church polity matters.

In addition, the PJCO committee – the only committee left of the ones established back in 2001 – has now been dismissed also. There is no longer a Songbook Committee, a Theological Education Committee, and a PJCO Committee. Without any committees left to discuss the issues, most likely the six or more years of breather will not be very productive in overcoming the obstacles to merger. It is hard not to conclude that after six or more years we will be no further ahead and that, in fact, we will be even further behind in our relationship. Since Synod London 2010, every successive URCNA Synod has taken steam out of the merger efforts: all committees were gradually dismissed, it was decided to work with the OPC on a common songbook rather than with the CanRC, a decision was made to “table indefinitely” any encouragement for CERCU to move toward proposing to enter Phase 3A, and it was decided to have a breather of at least six years before CERCU makes a Phase 3A recommendation. As far as URCNA mechanisms and URCNA collective drive with a view toward merger are concerned, we are worse off in 2016 than we were in 2001 when it all started. It is hard not to be discouraged by all these developments.

## **Other Matters**

Synod Wyoming 2016 unanimously adopted the proposed hymns to be the hymn portion of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. Synod Visalia 2014 had already adopted the Psalm section. The proposed hymns for the hymn section were already approved at the Orthodox Presbyterian Church’s (OPC) 2016 General Assembly. This means that the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* – a combined effort between the OPC and the URCNA – is ready to be published (Article 46).

With respect to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN), Synod Wyoming 2016 agreed with the recommendation of the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) and decided to remain in Ecumenical Contact (Phase One) of ecumenical relations. Synod Wyoming decided to enter into Ecumenical Contact (Phase One) with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI-NTT) and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA). Synod Wyoming decided to enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (EF) (Phase Two) with the Calvinistic Reformed Church in Indonesia (GGRC-NTT) and the Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCC) (Article 38).

Interestingly, Synod Wyoming also agreed with the recommendation of CECCA and decided by a fairly close margin of votes to enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase Two) with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA). This generated some discussion because the GKSA have women deacons, although a recent Synod of the GKSA "...confirmed by a substantial majority their practice of prohibiting women from the offices of Elder and Minister. This reflects their Scriptural conviction that women should not participate in the governing body of the church." In the GKSA, deacons are not part of the ruling body of the church. The discussion was partly generated by the fact that the GKSA is still in fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), although "...the GKSA continues to give a clear witness to the CRCNA regarding matters relating to the authority of Scripture, including the prohibition against ordaining women into the teaching and ruling offices of the church" (Article 38 and 41).

Decisions by Synod Wyoming to enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase Two) must be ratified by a majority of consistories by December 31, 2016 in order to go into effect.

The next URCNA Synod is scheduled to be held, the LORD willing, at Wheaton College in Illinois, in June 2018.

### **Appendix #3**

#### **Address to Synod Wheaton 2018 of the URCNA**

**By Rev. W.B. Slomp**

Brothers, it is a pleasure and an honour for me, together with my colleague Rev. William den Hollander, to be present with you in Wheaton Illinois to represent the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) and to enjoy your fellowship in the unity of the true faith. Such unity is possible only because of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He made us one and called us to be one and for that reason made us office bearers in his church so that, as Paul says in Ephesians 4:13, "... we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

It is a great joy for us that you have your Synod at the same time as the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches (OPC) and that we may witness that. As you know, the CanRC have a common and cherished bond with both of you, that we, despite our different histories, need to share and to sustain. The CanRC were not established in North America until after the second world War, and then, with a few exceptions, have primarily remained in Canada. You have a much longer and broader history in North America, as does the OPC. And so, our history as immigrants from the Netherlands is not as deeply embedded in North American society as yours. Of course, we cherish our own history, not because of who we are, but because of the way that God, in spite of our sins, has shown his faithfulness to us throughout the centuries. Our CanRC history shows that the Lord has brought us back on the

straight and narrow path time and again when we were straying. We must learn from our past. We do not want to deny that history.

But, we also need to understand and appreciate your history, especially those of you in the USA. To appreciate and understand each other takes time. When we first embarked on the road to unity together, many of us, especially from the CanRC, believed such unity could be accomplished in a fairly short time. After all, we both have the three forms of unity, and the Church Order of Dort. We had in mind what happened at the time of the two separate secession churches established in 1834 and in 1886, and the unity that took place six years later in 1892 and imagined that this will be possible in our situation. We were happy and excited as we anticipated establishing unity together.

However, the Lord had different plans. The process is taking longer than we anticipated. As federations of churches we both still had some maturing to do. Indeed, it is not always good to rush into things. Maturation is an ongoing process. We must learn to understand each other and to learn from past mistakes and sinful actions and thinking. To become mature is humbling, for you must recognize your own weaknesses and limitations. That is not easy. I also realize that for myself personally, even at my age. Maturity is something you strive for all your life. Constant self-examination is necessary and loving correction from those who are close to you. As Paul says in Philippians 3:12, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."

The process that we have gone through in the last 20 or 30 years has been humbling, and yet joyful and greatly satisfying. It is a great blessing that we have been able to get to know each other, and that we can continue to do so as church federations. As stated in the positive report of your committee to synod our contact together has been "rich and deeply profitable."

Personally, I feel a strong bond with the URCNA. It is a bond that I already experienced in the late 1980s and mid-1990s when I was a minister in Northern British Columbia. At that time I had regular and close contact with my colleagues who were going through the transition of joining the Alliance of Independent Reformed Churches which later on became the URCNA.

In those days we did not yet have pulpit exchanges. But, by the time I came to Edmonton, AB in 2002 that had changed. We had established an ecclesiastical fellowship wherein we could have pulpit exchanges fostering greater interaction which in time became more and more satisfying and stimulating. As an emeritus minister of the Immanuel CanRC in Edmonton Alberta Canada I regularly lead the worship services in your churches, locally and in the rest of the province, and in other parts of Canada. Many of my colleagues do the same. We also enjoy having your ministers on our pulpits. For me personally it is always a joy to lead your worship services. The Lord God has been good to us.

And so, brothers, I do not just speak for myself, but also for my colleagues and for the members of our churches, when I tell you that we feel a strong kinship with you and that we thoroughly enjoy the cooperation that we have in local endeavours such as combined worship services, home mission, Christian education, political action, and in broader endeavours such as combined classes, conferences, ministerials and seminary education. Such interactions are

helpful and stimulating. We truly feel quite at home among you and feel a strong connection because of our shared commitment to the reformed faith.

Yet, there are still some factors that keep us apart. For one thing, because of the geographic distance between us, those of you in the USA do not know us very well. Our last Synod of 2016 added two members to the unity committee, Rev. Andrew Pol and me, in the hope that along with the original members, Rev. William den Hollander and Rev. Clarence VanderVelde, more of us would be available to preach, to interact with you at your classis meetings, to answer questions and concerns and to work together in any meaningful way possible. We are still patiently waiting for your invitations from south of the border. We appreciate that you as synod also adopted a recommendation to that effect.

There are also matters that keep us organically apart. There is a perception that we are somewhat hierarchical in church polity. We believe that it is a wrong impression and we would welcome a colloquium to discuss this. It would be good to hear your concerns articulated so that we can carefully consider them, and if necessary, make the necessary changes. It is regrettable, therefore, that, as your report states that you “are currently not prepared for, or sufficiently interested in, such a discussion.” We understand, though, that you are willing to discuss this once we enter into phase 3A. We are thankful for that. Indeed, a lot of work has gone into the proposed joint church order (PJCO) which shows that in most ways we have much in common also in matters of church polity.

Where do we go from here? Our drive towards organic unity has been stalled. This is disappointing to many of us in the CanRC. But, we need to be mature and be patient and trust in the Lord and seek his will.

Throughout the ages we have seen that there are two ways in which God’s people go astray: by taking over worldly sinful practices and thinking, and by a legalistic interpretation and application of God’s law. Both are deadly. Both appeal to our natural instincts, to the sinful flesh. That is why we must be aware of those two dangers today as well. For we live in a postmodern culture that undermines the importance of history and that dogmatically imposes a rigid set of values divorced from the Word of God.

Brothers, we need to help and encourage one another to stay on the straight and narrow path that God has shown us in his precious Word. We need each other to guard against the appropriation of modern day morality on the one hand and dead orthodoxy on the other. Together we need to strive to be mature.

At this point we do not know yet where we are going in our relation as federations of churches. Are we going to be one United Federation? Perhaps in time we will. We don’t know. We are in God’s hands and must be obedient to him.

Brothers, it is our sincere desire and our prayer that the Holy Spirit may guide you in your deliberations and in the decisions you make and that the King of the Church guide you so that you may come to decisions that are pleasing in the God’s sight, and to the furtherance of God’s kingdom. To him be all the glory and praise!

On behalf of the CanRC, I bring you our warmest greetings.

Bill Slomp, Fraternal Delegate

#### 8.2.4.1 CCU Subcommittee - Theological Education

Committee for Church Unity

Theological Education Subcommittee

Report to General Synod Edmonton 2019

Esteemed Brothers:

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ

Synod Dunnville 2016 (Article 79) decided:

*To reappoint the Subcommittee for Theological Education of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU-STE) to be available to work with a corresponding committee of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) should an upcoming URCNA Synod reappoint the corresponding committee;*

The synod mandate for this committee was as follows:

*To mandate the CCU-STE to re-examine and discuss with our brothers in the URCNA the possibilities of operating at least one theological seminary by and for the churches, to ensure that such a seminary is accountable to and properly governed by the churches. Further, that the committee promote adequate funding for such an institution(s) by means of assessment per communicant member.*

Since neither Synod Wyoming 2016 nor Synod Wheaton 2018 of the URCNA reappointed a corresponding subcommittee, we did not convene as we had no conversation partners. Therefore, we must report that no progress toward church unity has been made by this sub-committee.

The present make-up of this committee was established at Synod Burlington 2010. We recommend that if this synod decides to mandate a CCU-STE, that a retirement schedule be put in place.

With Christian greetings:

JL van Popta: convenor

K Veldkamp

GH Visscher

B Faber

#### 8.2.4.2 CCU Subcommittee - Church order

# Report of the Church Order Sub Committee to Synod Edmonton 2019

---

## 1. Mandate

Synod Dunnville 2016 made the following decisions:

1. To accept the report and recommendations as a response to the mandate given by GS 2013 and therefore to refrain from entertaining further changes to the Proposed Joint Church Order ((PJCO) at this time;
2. The reappoint the Subcommittee for the Church Order of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU-SCO), with an additional member, to be available to work with a corresponding committee of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) should an upcoming URCNA Synod reappoint the corresponding committee;
3. To mandate this committee to work with the corresponding committee to finalize the PJCO, the Forms of Discipline, and the Synodical Regulations.

(Acts of General Synod Dunnville 2016, Article 80, p. 86).

## 2. The Committee and its activities

The committee members are Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen, Mr. Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. Anthony Roukema, Rev. John VanWoudenberg (convener), and Dr. Art Witten.

Since neither Synod Wyoming 2016 nor Synod Wheaton 2018 of the United Reformed Churches reappointed a corresponding subcommittee (see decision 2 above), the committee did not meet and did not incur any expenses.

## 3. Committee Composition

Should General Synod Edmonton 2019 follow General Synod Dunnville 2016 in reappointing “the Subcommittee for the Church Order of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU-SCO)...to be available to work with a corresponding committee of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) should an upcoming URCNA

Synod reappoint the corresponding committee,” then please note that Mr. Gerard J. Nordeman, who was first appointed to this committee by General Synod Neerlandia 2001, has indicated that he will no longer be available to serve.

Respectfully submitted,  
G. Nederveen  
G. J. Nordeman  
A.B. Roukema  
J. VanWoudenberg (convener)  
A. Witten

## 8.2.5 Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP)

Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*  
c/o 110 West 27<sup>th</sup> Street, Hamilton, ON, L9C 5A1

## **REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD EDMONTON 2019**

### ***Introduction:***

The Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP, hereinafter referred to as the Committee) hereby submits a report on its activities regarding the mandate given by General Synod Dunnville, 2016. Throughout the report, references to the Committee's mandate are provided based on the various articles published in the *Acts General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches – Dunnville, ON, 2016*.

We give thanks to the LORD for allowing us to work together as Committee to fulfill the mandate given to us by General Synod Dunnville. The 2014 *Book of Praise* continues to be well received by the churches, and also by others. This is evidenced by the fact that over the past years we have received and granted numerous copyright requests to make use of a variety of Psalms and Hymns (and even some prose sections) from the *Book of Praise* in other publications. What a blessing that our humble efforts are serving to facilitate the praise and worship of our great and awesome God by members in our churches and beyond!

### ***Overview of the report:***

For ease of reading, the report is divided into four sections. Each section deals with one key element of the Committee's mandate, and is organized under headings and sub headings with specific references to the *Acts 2016*:

## **SECTION ONE**

### **Mandate received from General Synod Dunnville, 2016**

#### **1.0 Implementation of General Synod decisions:**

1.1 *Acts*, Art. 54 – Reinstate Wording of Subscription Form

#### **2.0 Fostering Awareness (*Acts*, Art.127)**

#### **3.0 Contact with Australian Sister Churches (*Acts*, Art.127)**

3.1 Communication

3.2 Recent decisions by the FRCA Synod (June 2018)

#### **4.0 Corporate Status (*Acts*, Art. 127)**

#### **5.0 Communication to the Churches regarding copyright issues (*Acts*, Art. 127)**

#### **6.0 Maintain Archives and Website (*Acts*, Art. 127)**

6.1 Website

6.2 Archives

#### **7.0 Monitor Development of a Joint OPC-URCNA Songbook (*Acts*, Art. 127)**

7.1 Inclusion of *Book of Praise* material in *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*

7.2 Review of Psalms and Hymn sections

#### **8.0 Receive, Scrutinize and Evaluate Correspondence from the Churches (*Acts*, Art. 127)**

#### **9.0 Seek, Receive, Evaluate and Recommend Proposals for Changes to the Hymn Section (*Acts*, Art. 127)**

#### **10.0 Publication, Printing and Distribution (*Acts*, Art. 127)**

10.1 Publication

- 10.2 Printing
- 10.3 Contract
- 10.4 Distribution

**11.0 Committee Membership (*Acts, Art.113*)**

- 11.1 Members as appointed by General Synod Dunnville
- 11.2 Upcoming term completion of Br. A.H. den Hollander
- 11.3 Suggested future Membership

**SECTION TWO**

**12.0 Committee Proposals**

- 12.1 Proposed Change to Belgic Confession, Article 34

**SECTION THREE**

**13.0 Committee Address**

- 13.1 Permanent Mailing Address
- 13.2 Email Address
- 13.3 Meetings and Place of Meeting
- 13.4 Archives

**SECTION FOUR**

**14.0 Acknowledgements and Summary of Requests**

- 14.1 Acknowledgements
  - 14.2 Summary of Requests
-

## SECTION ONE

### Mandate received from General Synod Dunnville, 2016

#### 1.0 Implementation of GS decisions re. changes in the *Book of Praise*:

In addition to working with all aspects of the mandate as reported below, the Committee has implemented the decisions made by General Synod 2016 as follows:

##### 1.1 Article 54 – Appeal of Dunnville re: GS 2013 Art. 101 Rec. 4.1

As per Recommendation 4.3 – Reinstatement of 2010 Forms of Subscription, the Committee has reinstated the wording of the subscription form in the third printing of the *Book of Praise*.

#### 2.0 Fostering Awareness (*Acts*, Art. 127)

The Committee notes with gratitude the many expressions of interest in our *Book of Praise*. During the past three years, the Committee has continued to respond to various requests for information regarding the *Book of Praise*, and also dealt with a number of requests to copy, in whole or in part the Psalms and Hymns as well as other parts of the *Book of Praise*. These requests originated from within as well as from outside of our federation of churches. The Committee is delighted that there remains considerable interest at home and abroad in the Anglo-Genevan Psalter.

The Committee continues to maintain its website as part of its efforts of promotion and awareness for the *Book of Praise*. The website can be found at [www.bookofpraise.ca](http://www.bookofpraise.ca).

The Committee requests Synod that the mandate to foster an increased awareness of the existence of the *Book of Praise*, among others in the English-speaking world, be continued. Further, the Committee requests that Synod mandate the Committee to continue maintaining the Committee website at [www.bookofpraise.ca](http://www.bookofpraise.ca).

#### 3.0 Contact with Australian Sister Churches (*Acts*, Art.127)

##### 3.1 Official Communication

General Synod Dunnville 2016 mandated the Committee to maintain contact with the Australian Deputies, particularly in order to assist in the FRCA's pursuit of a possible Australian version of the *Book of Praise*. The Committee assisted the FRCA Deputies in (among others) the following ways:

3.1.1 Dr. J. Smith met with the Australian deputies when he was in Australia in April, 2016 in order to answer questions that they had at the time.

3.1.2 The Committee granted permission to the deputies to approach Premier Printing to obtain access to the files of the 2014 *Book of Praise* to cut down on their need to create their own original files for printing. (It should be noted that while we expressed a willingness to share these files, the Committee did not by that fact relinquish its copyright to the *Book of Praise*, nor share that copyright with the Australian churches. As such any changes that they might wish to make would need to be done with permission of individual copyright holders).

- 3.1.3 The Committee granted permission to the Australian Deputies to alter the text of the Psalms and Hymns by capitalizing pronouns that are not currently capitalized. We did urge the deputies to consider past decisions of Canadian Reformed Synods on this matter as they deliberated their proposal.
- 3.1.4 The Committee granted permission to the deputies to alter spelling to adjust from current Canadian English spelling to reflect Australian English spelling.
- 3.1.5 The Committee (as best it could) provided assistance in understanding copyright issues surrounding some of the hymns for which we do not own copyright.

### 3.2 Recent decisions by the FRCA Synod (June 2018)

3.2.1 The following relevant decisions were gleaned from the approved draft Acts of Synod Bunbury 2018 found at <http://synod.frca.org.au/2018/acts/>:

1. To adopt and produce an Australian version of the Canadian *Book of Praise* that:
  - a. includes the Psalms and Hymns of the 2014 Canadian *Book of Praise*, including the 19 additional hymns;
  - b. includes creeds, confessions, and liturgical forms as found in the 2014 Canadian *Book of Praise*, with adopted changes made by the FRCA, as well as the Australian Church Order. This includes the changes identified by Deputies in 1.2.4 and 1.2.5 of the Report, as well as the changes decided by Synod Albany 1987 Art 100;
  - c. makes use of the ESV translation of the Bible;
  - d. does not capitalise the personal pronouns for God.
2. To call this song book “Australian *Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter*”, subject to approval from the Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches, with Deputies for the *Book of Praise* being granted the liberty to select an appropriate title in the event that the SCBP of the CanRC declines to grant such approval.
3. To appoint a Standing Committee for the Australian *Book of Praise* (SCABP) consisting of 4 members to:
  - a. act as the legal entity within the FRCA to deal with copyright matters, as required;
  - b. produce in a timely manner a version of the Australian *Book of Praise* as authorised by Synod 2018, and as described in Article 60 of these Acts, and make such a version also available in a digital format suitable for use on mobile devices;
  - c. request Premier Printing to act as the publisher for the Australian *Book of Praise* and request Pro Ecclesia to become the Australian distributors;
  - d. maintain good contact with the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches;

- e. receive, scrutinise and evaluate correspondence from the churches, provide advice where required, and to make recommendations to the next synod as to the validity of any suggestions made. Concurrent with the committee's work, proposals from the churches would follow the ecclesiastical route (Art 30 CO); and
- f. report to the next synod in accordance with Rules for Synods regarding Deputies.

### 3.3 Request to Continue Mandate

The Committee takes note of these developments, and requests Synod that the mandate to maintain contact with our Australian sister churches and to assist them as they prepare an Australian version of the *Book of Praise* be continued.

## 4.0 **Corporate Status (Acts, Art. 127)**

The Committee has maintained its status as a corporation; all necessary documents for this purpose have been kept up to date. This also includes filing the Annual Income Tax forms with Revenue Canada. This is a legal requirement even though the Committee does not operate under an annual budget, and the Corporation does not generate an income or profit.

The Committee requests Synod that the mandate to maintain its corporate status be continued for the purpose of protecting the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in matters concerning the *Book of Praise*.

## 5.0 **Communication to the Churches regarding copyright issues (Acts, Art. 127)**

Over the past three years, the Committee has assisted individual churches with questions about copyright, particularly surrounding projection and live streaming. Further, the Committee also sent a communication to all of the churches on May 27, 2017 addressing these questions in a general way for the benefit of all of the churches.

## 6.0 **Maintain Archives and Website (Acts, Art. 127)**

### 6.1 Archives

The Committee continues to maintain archives at our permanent address, in the Theological College library. Rev. C. Bosch has for many years been our archivist, but recently asked to be relieved of this task. Dr. J. Smith has been found willing to take over this responsibility. Further, in order to maintain the integrity of the archives, the Committee has taken a decision to implement tri-annual inspections of the archives in the September/October before General Synod. Since the archives are housed at CRTS, Sr. Margaret Alkema (librarian for CRTS) agreed to assist the Committee with these inspections. There is no archives inspection report available for this report as this decision was made just prior to creation of this report, and so the first inspection report will be made to General Synod 2022.

### 6.2 Website

As mentioned previously in this report, the Committee continues to maintain its website as part of its efforts of promotion and awareness for the *Book of Praise*. The website can be found at [www.bookofpraise.ca](http://www.bookofpraise.ca).

### 6.3 Request to Formally Thank Rev. C. Bosch

The Committee requests that Rev. C. Bosch be formally thanked for his work as archivist for the Committee.

### 6.4 Request to Continue Mandate

The Committee requests that the mandate to maintain the archives and website be continued.

## 7.0 **Monitor Development of a Joint OPC-URCNA Songbook (Acts, Art. 127)**

The OPC and URCNA churches completed the publication and printing of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (TPH) in the spring of 2018. As the TPH Committee was working through copyright issues, access to the psalterhymnal.org website was restricted during the time leading up to publication. This meant that the Committee had to wait until such time that publication was completed before we could begin our work of reviewing the song book in order to *provide the churches with a sense of this new song book's composition, quality, and theological accuracy* (Acts, Art. 127 Rec. 5.6.6). The Committee was able to obtain copies of the TPH in August 2018, after which we set out to fulfill this part of our mandate.

### 7.1 Inclusion of Book of Praise material in Trinity Psalter Hymnal

Prior to publication, the OPC-URCNA Committee approached the Committee with a request to include the following Psalms from the *Book of Praise* in the Psalms section of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (TPH):

- Psalm 68 (#68A in TPH)
- Psalm 89 (#89A in TPH)
- Psalm 97 (#97A in TPH)
- Psalm 98 (#98B in TPH)
- Psalm 105 (#105B in TPH)
- Psalm 150 (#150A in TPH)

The Committee granted the OPC-URCNA Committee's request to use these Psalms in all printings and editions including electronic and digital format editions of *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* and in promotional materials developed to promote the Hymnal, with the provision that the OPC-URCNA Committee is not permitted to make changes to the text of said Psalms unless specific permission to that effect is secured in writing from the Committee. The Committee waived any royalties for the use of these Psalms in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.

The Committee had opportunity to review proofs of these Psalms, and submitted a list of corrections to the OPC-URCNA Committee to ensure that the final version in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* would be correct.

In addition, it should also be noted that the following Psalms currently in the *Book of Praise* under copyright by Dr. W. Helder were also included in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*:

Psalm 47 (#47B in TPH)  
Psalm 101 (#101B in TPH)  
Psalm 119 (#119A in TPH)

Further, the rhymed version of the Lord's Prayer (Hymn 63 in the *Book of Praise*) by Rev. G. Ph. van Popta was also included in the Hymn section of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (#521 TPH).

## 7.2 Review of *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*

While the Committee received letters from a number of churches requesting that we comment on the suitability of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* for adoption by the churches, we feel that this exceeds our mandate. We have been asked by Synod to provide a general sense of the book's composition, quality and theological accuracy.

With this in mind, we conducted a cursory study of the songs in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, in the first place because our mandate did not ask for an in-depth study, and also in part because we were not able to obtain copies until August of 2018, and so were restricted in our ability to perform an in-depth analysis and still be ready to report to Synod 2019. We reviewed all of the Psalms, and took a sampling of about 80 Hymns in order to complete our mandate in regards to the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.

As a result of our review, we provide the following observations:

### 7.2.1 General

7.2.1.1 The preface to the Psalter is very good. It clearly acknowledges that there is much new musical material in the book, and provides helpful musicological instruction for congregations and musicians alike.

7.2.1.2 The book contains a wide variety of useful indexes.

### 7.2.2 Psalms

7.2.2.1 Every Psalm has at least one complete rendering of the Psalm (either in one melody or split over multiple melodies).

7.2.2.2 On the whole, each rhymed Psalm is a faithful rendering of its corresponding biblical text.

7.2.2.3 We express special appreciation for the text renditions of the Psalms that were created by the OPC-URCNA Committee. Poetically they appear to be quite well done, and it is evident that much work has gone into ensuring faithfulness to the text of Scripture.

7.2.2.4 The text of the rhymed psalms includes the corresponding verse numbers from the Bible, a helpful addition.

7.2.2.5 We did note that some melody choices for the Psalms are jarring because:

- 7.2.2.5.1 they have strong associations with well-known hymns, or are melodies found in classical music (e.g. #30, #63A, #67B, #90A, #102A, #104A, #116A, #145C); or
- 7.2.2.5.2 they are Genevan melodies that were repurposed for other Psalms (e.g. #52 uses Genevan 77, #119S uses Genevan 110).
- 7.2.2.6 We observe that a number of the Psalms contain archaisms (e.g. #84C, #102B, #117C, #118B) and others retain the name Jehovah (e.g. #96, #98C, #117A, #117C).

### 7.2.3 Hymns

- 7.2.3.1 We found at least 30 hymns from the *Book of Praise* that have been used in the Hymn section of the TPH. Some of these have different melodies, or textual variations, while others are identical to the hymns in the *Book of Praise*.
- 7.2.3.2 We appreciate that there is a strong Christological emphasis in the hymn section.
- 7.2.3.3 A benefit of the large number of hymns is that a broad range of topics is covered well.
- 7.2.3.4 Where the OPC-URCNA Committee contributed original texts to the hymns, these are generally well done (e.g. #296, #302, #401, #490).
- 7.2.3.5 The text of the hymns is taken from a broad range of time from the early Christian Church to modern times. The melody range appears to be largely from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to present day, with a preponderance of melodies from the 19th century.
- 7.2.3.6 While there are many worthy hymns, some of the Principles and Guidelines appear to be inconsistently applied:
  - 7.2.3.6.1 Guideline 1: some hymns could be argued to have questionable theology (e.g. #163, #452). Further, in some hymns direct lines are drawn from events described in the Bible, and applied to believers as if Christians today are participants in the event (e.g. #365, #505, #515).
  - 7.2.3.6.2 Guideline 7: some hymns are not free from individualism (e.g. #272), sentimentality (e.g. #309, #471) and artificiality (e.g. #450, #477).
  - 7.2.3.6.3 Guideline 10: melodies for some of the hymns appear to be borrowed from music that suggests places and occasions other than the Church and the worship of God. For example, #422, #427, #532 are based on the symphonic melody ‘*Finlandia*’ by Jean Sibelius, #253 is based on the symphonic melody ‘*Ode to Joy*’ from Ludwig von Beethoven’s 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, #67B, #226, and #241 are based on the melody ‘*Thaxted*’ found in the ‘*Jupiter*’ movement of Gustav Holsts’s ‘*The*

*Planets'*, and #403 is based on Joseph Haydn's 'Austrian Hymn' (also used for 'Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles')

7.2.3.7 The size of the Hymn section will make it challenging for the churches to maintain their principle that the Psalms should have the principal place in the worship service (c.f. Art. 39 of the URCNA Church Order, and Principles and Guidelines #2).

7.2.3.8 Some hymns struck us as being better suited to individual worship than for use in corporate worship (e.g. #431, #500).

7.2.3.9 At least one hymn that was rejected by General Synod Burlington 2010 (*Acts*, Art. 138) is found in the TPH (#406 = August #16).

With this report completed, the Committee requests Synod to declare that we have fulfilled our mandate as it regards the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. Further we request that if Synod would like a more in-depth evaluation of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* with a view to use in the Canadian Reformed Churches, such a review not be done by the Committee because of tension between such a mandate and our existing mandate to maintain and promote the *Book of Praise*.

## **8.0 Receive, Scrutinize and Evaluate Correspondence from the Churches (*Acts*, Art. 127)**

In addition to correspondence from the churches related to the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (noted in 7.2) as well as related to proposals for changes to the Hymn Section (noted in 9.0), we have received some correspondence related to Hymn 1 that we are currently evaluating, with a view to submitting material to the next General Synod if the Committee feels that the recommendation would be of benefit.

## **9.0 Seek, Receive, Evaluate and Recommend Proposals for Changes to the Hymn Section (*Acts*, Art. 127)**

On May 2, 2018 the Committee sent a letter to the churches inviting them to submit hymns that they judge worthy of consideration to be submitted to a future General Synod for inclusion in the *Book of Praise*. Since that letter, a number of letters containing feedback and/or submissions have been received, and other churches have indicated that they are preparing a submission. As we are only in the beginning stages of this process, the Committee does not have any recommendations to make to General Synod Edmonton 2019 regarding any specific hymns at this time. In light of this, the Committee asks that the mandate to seek, receive, evaluate and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section to be compiled for possible submission to a future Synod be maintained.

## **10.0 Publication, Contract, Printing and Distribution (*Acts*, Art. 127)**

### **10.1 Publication**

Since General Synod Dunnville, Premier Printing was authorized to proceed with a third printing of the *Book of Praise*. In between print runs, the Committee maintains a list of corrigenda, which are submitted to Premier Printing for inclusion in the next

print run. Corrigenda items include formatting changes, punctuation and other minor corrections.

The Committee enjoyed an in-person meeting with Br. William Gortemaker of Premier Printing on September 7, 2018 at CRTS. This was very beneficial in terms of allowing the Committee members to meet the publisher and discuss some practical matters surrounding our relationship as Committee and Publisher and the work of publishing and printing the *Book of Praise*. The Committee hopes to be able to hold such meetings again in the future when opportunity arises.

## 10.2 Contract

General Synod Dunnville mandated the Committee to negotiate a contract renewal with Premier Printing with an expiry date of February 28, 2022. However, as we discussed this matter with Premier Printing, particularly in relation to the Committee's mandate to make as much of the *Book of Praise* available online as possible, it became evident that there is a tension between protecting the investment that our publisher makes in layout and publishing of the print and digital editions of the *Book of Praise*, and making this material available online. Having the content of the *Book of Praise* available online could result in decreased sales of the print and digital versions, potentially restricting Premier's ability to recoup its investment through sales of the book.

In order to resolve this tension, it would seem better to have the churches bear the cost of layout and publishing (through a fixed-price project negotiated with a publisher – in this case Premier Printing), and to have the cost of printing covered simply through the purchase of the books. In this way, Premier Printing does not have to carry the financial burden of layout and publishing and attempt to recoup that through sales of the book. That also frees the Committee and the Churches up to publish the content online, without negatively affecting our publisher's financial investment in the project.

The Committee feels it is important to note that Premier Printing has never seen the *Book of Praise* as a major profit making enterprise in their business, nor has the *Book of Praise* ever been a major source of profit for their business. On the contrary, they have very generously gone over and above what would be reasonably expected of them in order to ensure that the churches have been able to publish the *Book of Praise*, and that individuals have access to both the print and digital versions. As such, the Committee feels that Premier Printing's interests should be respected and protected.

The Committee is grateful to Premier Printing for the ongoing excellent relationship that we have with them, and would like to see this relationship continued in a way that protects their interests as publisher, while at the same time allowing the churches to use and promote its *Book of Praise* in a variety of ways (e.g. through publication of the songs online).

For this reason, the Committee requests that it be authorized to negotiate a new contract with Premier Printing that removes the financial burden of layout and publishing from Premier Printing and places it on the churches, and that the Committee be authorized to (with discretion) make use of funds in the General Fund to cover layout and publication costs through fixed-price projects when such work is required.

Should Synod require clarification on this matter, one or more Committee members can be available via telephone / Zoom / Skype.

### 10.3 Printing

Deluxe edition:	2016	0
	2017	0
	2018	0
Standard Edition	2016	10,240
	2017	0
	2018	0
Pulpit / Acc. Set	2016	0
	2017	66
	2018	0
<u>Total books printed:</u>		<u>10,306</u>

### 10.4 Distribution

During the past three years, sales may be summarized as follows:

Deluxe Edition:	
Canada:	381
United States of America	26
<u>International</u>	<u>807</u>
Total Sales – Deluxe Edition	1,277

Standard Edition:	
Canada:	3,912
United States of America	71
<u>International</u>	<u>2,265</u>
Total Sales – Standard Edition	6,248

Pulpit / Accompanist Set:	
Canada:	18
United States of America	5
<u>International</u>	<u>0</u>
Total Sales – Digital Editions	23

Digital / Electronic Editions\*:

Canada:	1,408
United States of America	51
<u>International</u>	<u>830</u>
Total Sales – Digital Editions	2,289

\* includes individual and corporate purchases

Inventory October, 2018	
Deluxe Edition	1,300
Standard Edition	7,364
<u>Pulpit / Accompanist Set</u>	<u>58</u>
Total Inventory	8,722

Discrepancies between Printed, Distributed and Inventory in each category are due to defects, and copies used by Premier Printing for administrative purposes.

The current retail price for the editions of the *Book of Praise* is broken down as follows (all funds CDN):

Standard Edition:	\$24.00
Deluxe Edition:	\$39.00
Digital Edition – PDF:	\$9.75
Digital Edition – Text:	\$9.75 for personal use, or \$1 per member or student for church/school use

Premier Printing offers a 25% discount for churches and/or schools when placing bulk orders.

## 11.0 Committee Membership (*Acts*, Article 113)

### 11.1 Members as appointed by Synod Dunnville (*Acts* Art. 113, Par 7.1)

Synod Dunnville appointed Committee members as follows:

- A.H. den Hollander (2019)
- M. Jongsma (2025)
- J. Smith (2022)
- D. Wynia (convenor) (2022)

### 11.2 Completion of the term of Br. A.H. den Hollander

Br. A.H. den Hollander will complete his term at the end of Synod 2019. We are grateful to this brother for his dedicated work on the Committee throughout the years of his term. The Committee recommends that Synod formally thank Br. den Hollander for his work as a member of the Committee.

### 11.3 Suggested future Membership

The Committee recommends that its membership continue to be set at 4 members. The Committee will provide General Synod with recommendations for a replacement for Br. den Hollander in a separate letter.

## SECTION TWO

### 12.0 Committee Proposals

#### 12.1 Change to Belgic Confession, Article 34

The Committee submitted a supplementary report to General Synod Dunnville, 2016. Due to the fact that this report was received late, it was declared inadmissible. The Committee feels that the proposal to change Belgic Confession, Article 34 as yet warrants consideration by the churches, and so we present it to General Synod Edmonton, 2019 for its consideration:

In consultation with Dr. Jason Van Vliet and Dr. Jannes Smith, the Committee proposes to replace the word ‘*expiation*’ in the first sentence with the word ‘*propitiation*’. The revised text would read as follows:

*“We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law (Rom 10:4), has by his shed blood put an end to every other shedding of blood that one could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sins.”*

The following serves as grounds for this recommendation:

1. It is clear that the change from ‘propitiation’ to ‘expiation’ occurred in the work leading to the 1984 *Book of Praise*. A look in the archives of the Committee reveals a draft page of Belgic Confession Article 34 which had the old ‘propitiation’ which was scratched out in pen and ‘expiation’ was written above it. All the draft copies after that have ‘expiation’. There is no explanation for the change. There is simply a note in brackets that whereas the French & Latin of the Belgic Confession have both ‘propitiation and satisfaction’ the Corpus Reformatorum only has the latter, i.e., ‘satisfaction’. That is interesting but it doesn’t answer the question why ‘propitiation’ was changed to ‘expiation’.
2. Bakhuizen van den Brink clearly indicates that both the French & Latin have ‘propitiation’, while the Dutch has a word that could mean more generally ‘atonement’ but certainly could mean ‘propitiation’ as well. So, as far as faithfulness to the original is concerned, ‘propitiation’ would be the better way to go.
3. The RSV has ‘expiation’ in 6 passages; the ESV (to which the rest of the *Book of Praise* 2014 is aligned) in none. Of these six, three times RSV has the verb ‘make expiation’. Of these three the ESV once has ‘cleanses’ (Deut. 32:43), once ‘make atonement’ (2 Sam. 21:3), and once ‘make propitiation’ (Heb. 2:17). The other three times the RSV has the noun ‘expiation’, and in all three the ESV changes it to ‘propitiation’ (Rom. 3:25, 1 Jn. 2:2, 4:10). Making the recommended change to Article 34 ensures a closer alignment with the ESV.
4. It should also be said that in Belgic Confession Article 34 the word ‘propitiation’ (or ‘expiation’, as we have it presently) is speaking most directly about Old Testament sacrifices. As the text says, the shedding of Christ’s blood puts an end to all other shedding of blood *“that one could or would make as a propitiation or*

*satisfaction for sins.*” The only drawback with translating ‘propitiation’ here is that when the person in the pew reads his Old Testament in ESV or NIV84 he will not see that word ‘propitiation’ anywhere. The word is always ‘atonement’, or ‘atoning sacrifice’. For that reason it might be easier to have “*one could or would make as an atonement or satisfaction for sins.*”

5. Even after taking the comment in #4 into consideration, the best solution may still be to switch back to the word ‘propitiation’. It is true to the original. It is better than ‘expiation’. And even though ‘propitiation’ may take some explanation, it’s not so bad if God’s people need to learn some (new) vocabulary to appreciate the riches of Christ’s work for us.
6. In Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1984), p. 888, a discussion on the word ‘propitiation’ concludes that “*the consistent Bible view is that the sin of man has incurred the wrath of God. That wrath is averted only by Christ’s atoning offering. From this standpoint his saving work is properly called propitiation.*” Both this discussion and the ESV’s scrubbing of ‘expiation’ in favour of ‘propitiation’ suggest that ‘expiation’ has problematic associations in theological debate.

## **SECTION THREE**

### **13.0 Committee Address**

The Committee served as the address to which correspondence regarding the *Book of Praise* could be directed. The Committee requests that the mandate to receive, scrutinize and evaluate the contents of correspondence from the churches be continued and to report to the next General Synod as to the validity of the suggestions made.

#### 13.1 Permanent Mailing Address

Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* (SCBP)  
c/o Theological College  
110 West 27th Street  
Hamilton, Ontario, L9C 5A1

#### 13.2 Email Address

In addition to the regular mailing address, correspondence may be sent electronically to: [bookofpraise@canrc.org](mailto:bookofpraise@canrc.org).

#### 13.3 Meetings and Place of Meeting

The Committee regularly met at the facilities of the Theological Seminary, our official address. Since publishing the report to Synod Dunnville the Committee has met 6 times. All meetings were conducted in excellent harmony.

#### 13.4 Archives

The Committee’s central archives are maintained at our permanent address, in the Theological College library. Dr. J. Smith has been found willing to serve as archivist. The Committee requests that Synod mandate that the Committee archives continue to be kept in this way.

## SECTION FOUR

### 14.0 Acknowledgments and Summary of Requests

#### 14.1 Acknowledgments

As the Committee worked out its mandate in the past 3 years, some expert advice was required in specific areas. The Committee is grateful that such advice was always provided when requested. The Committee therefore wishes to acknowledge with appreciation the contributions of the following individuals in their respective areas of expertise:

Dr. W. Helder (Hamilton, ON) for ongoing input on language and poetry related issues.

Rev. G. Ph. Van Popta (Hamilton, ON) for input and advice related to past operation and decisions of the Committee.

Dr. J. Van Vliet (Hamilton, ON) for advice in creeds and confessions.

Rev. C. Bosch (Burlington ON), for serving as archivist for the Committee.

Sr. M. Alkema (Hamilton, ON), for her willingness to inspect the archives of the Committee.

#### 14.2 Summary of Requests

14.2.1 Re: Par 2.0: The Committee requests Synod that the mandate to foster an increased awareness of the existence of the *Book of Praise*, among others in the English-speaking world, be continued.

14.2.2 Re: Par 3.3: The Committee requests Synod that the mandate to maintain contact with our Australian sister churches be continued.

14.2.3 Re: Par 4.0: The Committee requests Synod that the mandate to maintain its corporate status be continued for the purpose of protecting the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in matters concerning the *Book of Praise*.

14.2.4 Re: Par 6.4: The Committee requests that the mandate to maintain the archives and website be continued.

14.2.5 Re: Par 7 (end of section): The Committee requests that Synod declare that we have fulfilled our mandate as it regards the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. Further we request that if Synod would like a more in-depth evaluation of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* with a view to use in the Canadian Reformed Churches, such a review not be done by the Committee because of tension between such a mandate and our existing mandate to maintain and promote the *Book of Praise*.

14.2.6 Re: Par 9.0: The Committee requests that the mandate to seek, receive, evaluate and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section to be compiled for possible submission to a future Synod be continued.

14.2.7 Re: Par. 10.2: The Committee requests that it be authorized to negotiate a new contract with Premier Printing that removes the financial burden of layout and publishing from Premier Printing and places it on the churches, and that the Committee be authorized to (with discretion) make use of

funds in the General Fund to cover layout and publication costs when such work is required.

14.2.8 Re: Par 6.3: The Committee requests that Synod formally thank Rev. C. Bosch for his work as archivist for the Committee.

14.2.9 Re: Par 11.2: The Committee requests that Br. A.H. den Hollander be formally thanked for his work on the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

The Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*:

Arie H. den Hollander, secretary/treasurer

Martin Jongsma

Dr. Jannes Smith

Richard Wynia, convenor

## 8.2.6 Inspection of Archives

October 1, 2018

Synod Organizing Committee  
Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton  
21112 35 Ave NW  
Edmonton, AB T6M 2P6  
[clerk@synod.edmontonimmanuel.ca](mailto:clerk@synod.edmontonimmanuel.ca)

**By Electronic Submission and 5 mailed copies**

General Synod Edmonton 2019

**Re: Report on the Inspection of the Archives for Synod Dunnville 2016**

Esteemed Brothers:

We dutifully report that on Monday September 24, 2018, Brian deWalle and Andrew Kieft inspected the archives of **Synod Dunnville 2016** in the care of Klaas Spithoff of Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church.

The records have been found to be complete and in good order.

On behalf of the Council of Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church,  
Sincerely,



Warner Reinink  
Council Chair



Andrew Kieft  
Council Clerk

## 8.2.7 Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS)

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
Report to  
General Synod Edmonton, 2019**

October 11, 2018

**Esteemed brothers in the Lord,**

The Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, operating as the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (the “Seminary”), hereby submits to your assembly, in accordance with section 6 (1) of the Canadian Reformed Theological College Act 1981 (the “Act”), a report of its work and decisions since the last General Synod held in Dunnville, Ontario, in May of 2016 (“Synod 2016”).

The report is organized with the following sub headings:

<b>Matter</b>	<b>Page</b>
Board of Governors	2
Senate and Faculty	2
Support from Australia	4
Staff	4
Student Body	5
South Africa	5
Finance and Property	6
Pastoral Training Program	7
Accreditation with the Association of Theological Schools	7
Strategic Planning 2017	7
Second-Year Preaching Consent	8
Changes to Operating By-law 12	8
Form for Ordination of Professors	10
Response to Synod Dunnville 2016	10
Recommendations	12
List of Appendices	13

## **Board of Governors**

Synod 2016 appointed to the Board brs. K. VanVeen, P. Vandersluis, and Revs. J. Louwerse, J. Slaa, and J. Poppe with the terms to continue to 2025. At the meeting of September 8, 2016 letters of acceptance were received from these brothers and they subsequently signed the “Declaration of Governors” as found in By-law 12 as well as the “Statement of Compliance” as found in the Handbook of the Seminary.

Since Synod 2016, the Board of Governors has met 6 times. The meetings took place in Hamilton, Ontario in the facilities of the Seminary on the following dates: Sept. 8, 2016, Jan. 14, 2017, Sept. 7, 2017, Jan. 11, 2018, Sept. 6, 2018, and Jan. 17, 2019. Minutes of these meetings of the Board are available for consultation by members of Synod 2019.

The following brothers have completed their term as Board members: Revs. J. Ludwig and R. Aasman, and br. B. Hordyk. The Board would like to express its gratitude for the work done by these brothers during the last nine years. The Board is submitting a proposal to Synod to fill the vacancy in the Finance and Property Committee. Synod will receive background information regarding the qualifications of these brothers. Recommendations to fill the ministerial vacancies may be expected from Regional Synod West 2018 and Regional Synod East 2018

## **Senate and Faculty**

### *Retired faculty*

Our Lord took to Himself Dr. J. DeJong on April 15, 2017. We commend his wife, Margaret, and her family into the care of our heavenly Father. Mrs. Faber was also taken into glory on June 30, 2018. May the Lord comfort her children and grandchildren in their loss. Prof. J. Geertsema, though he has had more treatments for cancer, is in stable condition and enjoying relatively good health. Dr. N. Gootjes remains on long term disability and continues to be cared for at Shalom Manor in Grimsby, Ontario. In addition, Mrs. K. Deddens is doing well, and is grateful to the Lord that her cancer is in remission. In humbleness, we entrust Dr. and Mrs. Gootjes and their family, as well as Prof. J. Geertsema, and Mrs. Deddens into God’s keeping and request the continued prayers of the churches for these individuals. We thank the Lord that Dr. C. Van Dam is able to be active in his retirement — writing, speaking, and attending conferences.

### *Upcoming Retirement of Dr. G. H. Visscher*

Dr. G. H. Visscher has informed the Board that he will retire, D.V., after the 2019-2020 academic year. Therefore, the Board declares a vacancy in the New Testament department beginning September 2020. A Search Committee (consisting of three members of the Academic Committee, one member of the Finance and Property Committee as well as the Principal) was appointed and the work of researching candidates began. Input was received from the Senate and many of the churches. In a separate submission to be provided at a later date, the Board will be seeking the approval of Synod 2019 to appoint a new Professor of New Testament to begin September 2020. Although Dr. Visscher could have retired immediately after Synod 2019, he was interested in teaching a little bit longer, and this also gives the seminary, as well as the new

professor, the opportunity to make a smoother transition. Therefore, the Board supports the timeline suggested by Dr. Visscher.

### *Faculty milestones*

Since 2016, there have been a number of faculty publications. *As You See the Day Approaching: Reformed Perspectives on the Last Things*, edited by T. G. Van Raalte was completed and made available for distribution. This book is a reproduction of the speeches and responses given at the January 2015 CRTS conference. All members of the Senate contributed to this book. Emeriti Dr. VanDam saw his book *The Deacon*, a companion volume to his widely-read *The Elder*, published with Reformation Heritage Books. Dr. Van Raalte saw his doctoral dissertation published with Oxford University Press. The title is *Antoine de Chandieu: The Silver Horn of Geneva's Reformed Triumvirate*. The fruit of another lengthy labour is Dr. Smith's recently completed *Intermediate Hebrew Grammar*. For the moment this book is being published in-house and the next few classes of freshmen students will serve as guinea pigs to fine-tune the work. Turning to more popular literature, the much-anticipated work on the Psalms, edited by Rev. Peter Holtvliwer, is now in distribution. It's called *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms*. Two faculty members, Dr. de Visser and Dr. Van Vliet, were involved in this project. Dr. Van Vliet also published a three volume work entitled *Growing in the Gospel: Sound Doctrine for Daily Living*, which is being used widely within the churches.

In addition to full-length books, over the past year professors have written popular articles, for example on the pages of *Clarion*, as well as scholarly articles in journals such as *Unio Cum Christo*, the Mid-America Theological Journal, Calvin Theological Journal, the Sixteenth Century Journal, Renaissance and Reformation and chapter contributions to books such as *The Early Sessions of the Synod of Dort* and *The SBL Commentary on the Septuagint*.

### *Principalship*

As decided by Synod 2016, Dr. J. VanVliet was appointed as Principal of the Seminary for a three-year term starting in September 2017. At the September 2018 Board meeting, it was reported that the most recent Principal Evaluation was very positive.

### *Course work*

The Board can report that the work, training, and instruction at the Seminary continued without interruption since the last General Synod. Each September, the Board received an extensive report from the Senate about the work of the previous academic year. These reports indicate that all courses were taught and that the adopted curriculum was fully implemented. In addition, each spring and fall, a team of two Board members visited the lectures for two days and provided a comprehensive report to the Board. These reports indicate that the instruction provided by the faculty is fully Scriptural, in accord with the confessions of the churches, and is academically challenging.

### *Visits to the Churches by Faculty Members*

- a. The following visits were made to the Western churches: Dr. T.G. VanRaalte visited the Alberta churches October 25-29, 2016; Dr. G.H. Visscher visited the churches in British Columbia April 12 to May 1, 2017. Dr. J. Van Vliet will visit the Manitoba churches, D.V., the fall of 2018.
- b. Other trips: Dr. J. Van Vliet went to South Africa June 27 to July 11, 2017 to give lectures to the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA) and its theological students. There is a memorandum of understanding with the FRCSA that a CRTS professor will travel to South Africa once a year to give these lectures (see below “South Africa”). Dr. A.J. de Visser was there from July 5-31, 2018. These trips are paid for by the FRCSA. In December 2017 Dr. T.G. Van Raalte gave lectures in Poland. In October 2017 Dr. J. Van Vliet was invited to visit the Manitoba churches to speak in conjunction with the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. From February 20 to March 3, 2018 Dr. Van Vliet visited the Korean and Chinese churches.
- c. Visits to Ontario Churches: 21 churches have been visited in the last 3 years. 10 churches (including Grand Rapids) need to be visited yet.

### **Support from Australia**

The bond between the Seminary and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) is reflected not only in the student body (presently there are six students from Australia), but also in the significant financial support received from these churches. Synod 2018 of the FRCA decided to provide support at the level of \$90 per communicant member. During the last three years, the Board was also pleased to receive representation from the Deputies for the Training for the Ministry of the FRCA at Board meetings and at the annual Convocation. The Board is very thankful for the continued support of the FRCA.

### **Staff**

#### *Administrative assistants*

The Board is grateful for the continued service of Catherine Mechelse in her full-time administrative role. Leanne Kuizenga continues to serve as assistant to the faculty, especially to the Principal and Registrar. Leanne works 20 hours a week.

#### *Librarian*

We are grateful for the faithful and professional service of our librarian, Margaret Alkema. Each year, she files a comprehensive Report to the Board about developments and changes in the Library. From these reports, it is abundantly evident that the Library is well-managed and ever responsive to the needs of faculty and students as well to constant changes in technology. The library received \$35,000 each year from the WSA in 2016-2018. This amount has been the same

since 2014. In 2016, the library also received \$5000 from the BOG. This amount was increased to \$6,000 in 2017 and 2018.

There have been no changes to library software. There are currently approx. 34,700 books in the library. There are also over 16,800 articles indexed in the Reformed Periodical Index.

The BOG repaired a humidification unit and added some components to it, to help improve humidity levels in the winter.

The librarian works together with the faculty to provide information literacy sessions for the students so that they will be better library users throughout their time at CRTS and later in the ministry. Last summer a large inventory of the entire library was carried out.

The library catalogue and the Reformed Periodical Index (which includes *Clarion*, *Diakonia*, *Reformed Perspective*, *Preach the Word*, *Lux Mundi*, and past issues of *Koinonia*) can be found here:

Library catalogue: <http://vtls-crts-app.iii.com:2391/search/query?theme=CRTS>

RPI Index: <http://vtls-crts-app.iii.com:2391/search/query?theme=RPI>

## **Student Body**

Since Synod Dunnville, twelve students graduated with a Master of Divinity Degree:

- a. Iwan Borst, Jonathan Chase, Jeremy DeHaan, William denHollander, Hilmer Jagersma, HanGil Lee, David Pol, and Jake Torenvliet in 2016.
- b. James Zekveld in 2017.
- c. Darren Feenstra, Cody Swaving and Sungwon Yoon in 2018.

Two students graduated with a Bachelor of Theology degree: John Boekee in 2016, and Scott Bredenhof in 2018.

One student, Robert Smith, graduated in 2018 with a Diploma of Theological Studies.

In the academic year 2018-2019 there are:

- a. 6 freshmen in the M.Div. program. 1 student has been admitted to the Diploma program. 2 Korean M. Div. students are joining us for one year of the M.Div. program.
- b. 7 second-year students: 4 in the M. Div., 2 in the B. Th. and 1 in the Diploma of Theological Studies program
- c. 3 third-year students all in the M. Div. program.
- d. 6 fourth- year students all in the M. Div. program.

Total: 19 M. Div., 2 B.Th., 2 Dip. Th., for a grand total of 23 students plus 2 Koreans joining CRTS for one year.

## **South Africa**

Three CanRC synods (Burlington 2010, Carman 2013 and Dunnville 2016) have encouraged CRTS to consider carefully the needs of Free Reformed Churches in South Africa for theological

training. At the request of the Curators for Theological Education in South Africa, a meeting was held at the seminary on May 25 & 26, 2016. In attendance were two representatives from South Africa, Dr. Pieter Boon and br. Ronald Meeske, the Senate of CRTS, as well as two representatives of the Board, Revs. Richard Aasman and John Ludwig. At this meeting the brothers from South Africa made an earnest request that we would provide them with video recordings of our lectures, in order that a facilitator in South Africa could review this material with some of their theological students and so enhance the Reformed character of their training, especially for the students from the mission churches, most of whom could not realistically come to Canada for seminary training. If there are South African students who can come to Hamilton, the Curators will certainly encourage them to do so.

After prayerful reflection and discussion of many details, and with Board approval, a memorandum of understanding was signed. A pilot project began in September 2016 in the Freshmen classroom, and in September 2017 this was expanded to include the senior classroom as well. Many lectures have been recorded, and Rev. Hannes Breytenbach serves as facilitator in South Africa discussing the lecture material with the students to ensure that they understand what is being taught and also giving opportunity for discussion within the South African context. Although there have been technical hurdles to overcome, in general the program has gone well and the students in South Africa are receiving education that is more Reformed in character. In this way they are better prepared to serve within their own federation and its extensive mission work.

It should be clear that the students who receive video lectures from CRTS do not receive a degree or certificate from CRTS. Neither are they officially enrolled in the seminary. That would involve a whole other level of organization and commitment, both on their side and ours. For the time being, this arrangement is feasible and manageable from both sides.

Part of the memorandum of agreement is that each of the CRTS professors, in turn, would travel to South Africa to give some face-to-face instruction to the students there, as well as speaking within the churches. The Curators for Theological Education felt that it was very important that both the students and the members of their congregations would have a personal relationship with the professors of CRTS. So far Drs. Van Vliet and de Visser have gone and the trips have been greatly appreciated. Although it remains to be seen how this agreement might develop in the future, it is clear that the LORD has already blessed it in many ways.

## **Finance and Property**

Attached to this Report for inclusion in the *Acts of Synod* are the 2016, 2017 and 2018 Annual Reports of the Finance and Property Committee (Appendix 1) along with audited Annual Financial Reports for the fiscal years ending December 31 for each of 2016, 2017 and 2018 (Appendix 2). These Reports indicate that the facilities of the Seminary are functioning very well and are being kept in good repair. The seminary is in the process of receiving a comprehensive building audit from a local architectural firm so that long-term maintenance and upgrades to the

building can be planned out in a responsible and stewardly manner. It is also clear from the F&P Reports that the churches continue to support the Seminary faithfully. Each year the budget could be met. The Board is thankful for the work of Mr. H. Salomons, C.A., who was Auditor for many years. In its January 2018 meeting, the Board appointed a new auditor: DBK Accounting. In addition, the Board also acknowledges with thankfulness the generous annual contributions of the Women's Savings Action.

## **Pastoral Training Program**

The Board can report that the Pastoral Training Program continues to work very well. There is good cooperation from the churches in finding placements for the students, and the students continue to testify that the benefits for them are considerable.

## **Accreditation with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS)**

In 2013, CRTS received accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), based in Pittsburgh, PA. This association is comprised of over 270 member-schools of theology, including CRTS, and the goal of the association is to promote the improvement of theological education at the member schools. The accreditation that CRTS received in 2013 is valid until spring 2020. ATS did require some work in the intervening years, most notably in the areas of assessment and shared governance. CRTS submitted a report to ATS at the end of December 2015 regarding shared governance. In this report, CRTS explained the roles of the Board and the faculty in such areas as curriculum development, freedom of inquiry, ongoing evaluation of faculty, and budget preparation. ATS was satisfied with the explanations provided in the report and accepted the report in 2016. In January 2017, CRTS was required to submit a report that demonstrated that CRTS was working with and analyzing its assessment data demonstrating that CRTS was meeting its program outcomes. This report was also accepted by ATS and CRTS was commended for assessing many different aspects of the educational program and the well-crafted assessment tools.

In June 2016, Dr. G. H. Visscher attended the ATS Biennial meeting. Attendance at these meetings is very useful for learning from other schools about best practices, governance matters, and developments in education and educational models at ATS schools, etc. In March 2018, the Assessment Coordinator, Margaret Alkema, attended a workshop at ATS's office to prepare for the next self-study. Work will begin in earnest in September 2018 and conclude with a self-study report in December 2019, D.V. In June 2018, Dr. Jason Van Vliet attended the biennial meeting and at this meeting, the ATS membership voted overwhelmingly to rewrite the standards.

## **Strategic Planning Session 2017**

On September 6, 2017, Kevin Hutchinson led CRTS's second Strategic Planning Session. Members of the Board, faculty, staff, as well as several alumni and current students came together to discuss the future of CRTS. At the strategic planning session, we reviewed and refreshed the existing strategic plan, had a presentation on distance education and developed new key thrusts and initiatives to be worked on over the next few years.

One significant “key thrust” approved by the Board was distance education. The Board appointed an ad hoc committee to study how CRTS could use the possibilities and potential of technology within the context of distance education with a primary focus on serving our supporting churches, as well as their mission works, in the best possible way without sacrificing the integrity and quality of training for the ministry. Two of the Australian deputies (Rev. Peter K.A. De Boer, Rev. Dirk Poppe) as well as representatives from our sister churches in South Africa (Rev. Hannes Breytenbach, br. Ronald Meeske) were asked to join this committee as their input and suggestions would enhance the discussion and lead to a better and more well-rounded outcome. The following points are being considered:

- a. What are the present needs and future plans of the churches in Australia, South Africa and Canada;
- b. What are the needs and future plans of mission work associated with these churches?
- c. What parameters and options does ATS (CRTS’s present accrediting agency) present to us? What opportunities and restrictions vis-à-vis accrediting, if any, do we need to keep in mind with respect to Australia and South Africa, or mission contexts?
- d. What different models are available for distance education? What are the pros and cons of each model?
- e. What are the main platforms (hardware & software) that educational institutions use for distance education?
- f. How can we ensure the integrity and quality of the program?
- g. How does spiritual formation of students take place through distance education?

The other key initiatives and thrusts being worked on are: spiritual formation with a focus on prayer development, encouraging enrollment, expanding the PTP, improving training for church planting/mission, looking at CRTS’s relationship with the URCNA, and looking at the finances and funding of CRTS.

## **Second-year Preaching Consent**

At the first CRTS strategic planning session held on September 4, 2014, it was decided to “investigate second-year preaching consent and other internship opportunities for students and have recommendations on how to implement.” This issue had arisen in part for two reasons: first, because CRTS now has students from the URCNA, and they are permitted to seek a full-summer preaching internship after only one year of study at CRTS whereas our CanRC students must wait until after their third year; second, CanRC students attend CRTS only eight of the twelve months each year and the first- and second-year students then spend four months in work not related to their vocational goals. A report was prepared on this matter, which was approved by both the Senate and the Board. The report was then sent on to two churches who were interested in pursuing this and it is progressing through the assemblies.

## **Changes to By-law 12**

Since the last Synod, the Board of Governors has dealt with the procedure regarding the appointment of the principal which requires an amendment to the By-laws. This change has been

approved by the Board, but since all By-law changes need to be approved by General Synod we hereby submit it for approval. It is as follows:

## Observations

1. The Board of Governors notes that according to the College Act, 5.11
  - a. *The government, conduct, management and control of the College and of its property, revenues, expenditures, business and affairs are vested in the Board and the Board has all powers necessary or convenient to perform its duties and achieve the object and purpose of the College including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the power,*
    - (a) *through (f) omitted*
    - (b) (g) *to appoint or remove the Principal;*
2. Meanwhile, Bylaw 12, 10.01 (b) stipulates:
  - a. 10.01 *Composition and Powers – All appointments to the faculty shall be subject to the approval of Synod. The Board of Governors shall seek the advice of Synod with respect to the following matters . . .*
    - (b) *the appointment of the Principal, and his power, function and duty;*
    - (d) *the termination of a member of the faculty or the Principal.*
3. From the above it appears that these two are in conflict with each other, the one maintaining that the Board can appoint the principal, the other maintaining that a General Synod should be consulted beforehand.
4. In recent years CRTS, with Synod involvement, has transitioned from a rotational system (new principal every 3 years) to a more permanent system (with a Principal appointed for up to 9 years (3 renewable terms for 3 years each). See CH 4.5 in Appendix 3. There is general agreement that this new system works well as it allows for some more continuity for some years, without saddling one person with the task permanently.
5. The involvement of a General Synod is, however, somewhat cumbersome with respect to the implementation of the new system for the following reasons.
  - a. The end of each of the three years do not necessarily coincide well with the timing of General Synods with respect to re-appointment.
  - b. One can imagine situations in which the need for a Synod to terminate a faculty member's role as a principal would be problematic.
  - c. Furthermore, if a person who is Principal wishes to be such no longer, or the CRTS community no longer wants him to be such, is it really beneficial and edifying for this to become a matter for a federational discussion through a Synod? Would it not be best to keep such discussions to the smallest circle, especially since the Act 1981 states that "the Board has all powers necessary or convenient to perform its duties and achieve the object and purpose of the College

including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the power . . . to appoint or remove the Principal”?

## **Recommendations**

1. That Synod agree that, with a view to the smooth operation of the Seminary, the Board should be allowed to execute the power of the Act, Section 5.11 without limitation, and simply report at a Synod either what it expects will happen and/or report on what has happened with respect to the position of the Principal.
2. That Synod agree to the following changes to Bylaw 12:
  - a. That section (b) of Bylaw 12 10.01 be deleted
  - b. That the words “or the Principal” be deleted from section (d) of Bylaw 12 10.03.
3. That once the above changes are made to the Bylaw, the Board be mandated by Synod to make the necessary consequential changes to the CRTS Handbook (CH).

## **Form for the Ordination of Professors**

The Board accepted the recommendation of the Academic Committee to approve a Form for the Ordination of Professors, to include in the CRTS Handbook. The Board hereby informs Synod that this form has been formulated for the installation of professors when they are installed as a minister in one of the local churches. It is included in this report as CH 5.1.3 in Appendix 3.

## **Response to Synod Dunnville 2016**

### **A. Statement of Institutional Purpose (SIP)**

1. The Board-proposed Basis of the SIP is “CRTS submits to the infallible Word of God and is faithful the ecumenical creeds and the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort”.
  - a. Dunnville Church has suggested that terminology is “faithful to the creeds” can come across a bit presumptuous, but does not clarify what is meant by “presumptuous” or what is objectionable about it.
  - b. Dunnville church suggested the wording should be more in line with wordings used elsewhere (Forms for Baptism, Profession of Faith).
  - c. Synod took over Dunnville’s proposal and approved its wording: “CRTS submits to the infallible Word of God in the Old and New Testaments as summarized in the ecumenical creeds and the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort”.

### *Considerations*

1. Dunnville’s wording is somewhat problematic.
  - a. Could this wording not be understood as saying that CRTS is to submit (only) to a summary of the Word of God? Perhaps (only) to parts that are mentioned in the creeds and confessions? While this is surely not the intention of Dunnville church nor Dunnville Synod, it could be read as binding the CRTS community to a truncated version of the Word of God rather than the fully Scriptures.

- b. Dunnville church and Synod directs the Board to the wording of the Baptism Form and the Profession of Faith form. But neither of these forms adopt the wording Synod Dunnville has now adopted. Rather than speaking about a summary of Scripture, they speak of a summary “of the doctrine of Scripture.”
- 2. It should be noted that Synod, rather than encouraging the Board to do so, actually adopted Dunnville church’s proposal (art. 76, 4.6.3), but at the same time motioned the Board towards Toronto’s suggestion that the SIP should be an internal CRTS document.
  - a. There is wisdom in the advice of Toronto and it is best not to disturb in any way the present legislative basis of CRTS, but rather understand the SIP as an internal document. The College Act (1981) already has a Basis, namely, “The College shall be carried on as a Christian institute of theology whose basis shall be the infallible Word of God as interpreted by the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt as adhered to by the churches.” (CH 2.1).
  - b. It can also be noted that the wording originally proposed by the Board to Synod Dunnville (“CRTS submits to the infallible Word of God and is faithful the ecumenical creeds and the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort”) is clear and avoids the problems identified above; subscription is then to the totality of the Scriptures. This proposed SIP should be perfectly acceptable to a seminary that wishes to be solidly reformed. Given the sentiment expressed to and at Synod Dunnville, it may be prudent, however, not to press the point but acquiesce with respect to wording commonly used in the federation.

*Recommendations*

In conclusion

- 1. In agreement with the advice of Toronto, the SIP is best understood as an internal policy document.
- 2. With respect to the SIP the Board informs Synod 2019 that it
  - a. Adopts the wording, “CRTS submits to the doctrine of the infallible Word of God as summarized in the ecumenical creeds and the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.”
  - b. Agrees to regard the SIP as an internal document, intended to support and in no way contradict the Act of 1981.

**B. Re Tenure**

The church at Toronto also recommended to Synod 2016 that it mandate a comprehensive review of the tenure policy of CRTS and a proposal at the next Synod re tenure; Synod mandated the Board to consider the input of Toronto. The Board provides the following response to Synod Dunnville (and Toronto):

- 1. Many seminaries across North America have abandoned the practice of granting tenure as it opened up a way for abuse by those to whom it was granted; instead, all faculty are considered to be perpetually under review.
- 2. CRTS hires as professors only those who are ministers of the Word and function in both an academic and ecclesiastical context.
- 3. While CRTS does indeed not have a “full tenure policy,” its present policy does allow beneficially for a six-year period after the appointment of a professor in which the

professor, senate, and Board can affirm the validity and desirability of the original appointment.

4. A full tenure policy such as universities often have necessarily involves:
  - a. Different levels of professorial status (assistance, associate, full)
  - b. Differing pay grades commensurate with these varying levels of professional status.
  - c. Differing levels of both status and pay would potentially be problematic with a view to equality among office-bearers (Art. 74 CO), and the CRTS policy and practice of remunerating professors in a manner commensurate with local ministers (cf. CH 5.3.1).
  - d. Adopting a full tenure approach is not beneficial in a small seminary context but could introduce unhealthy tension, rivalry, etc.
  - e. Adequate provisions and encouragement with respect to development of gifts and production of publications have been made in recent additions to the CH (5.1, 5.6, 5.10) as well as by means of the role of the academic dean, who is to discuss these matters with colleagues in accordance with internal faculty guidelines.
  - f. Seminary professors are ministers of the Word committed to their families, the seminary, and the church federation. Should there be any evidence of a reduced commitment to the seminary and professional development, there are adequate means to address such without necessitating a more elaborate tenure structure.

## **Recommendations**

1. To receive this report and all its appendices.
2. To acknowledge the expiration of the terms of office of Revs. J. Ludwig, R. Aasman, and br. B. Hordyk and to express gratitude for their work.
3. Pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of By-Law 3
  - a. To appoint, elect or re-appoint six active ministers to hold office until the next General Synod and to appoint at least three substitutes from each Regional Synod area, keeping in mind that the By-laws prohibit anyone from serving more than three consecutive terms and also keeping in mind that:
    - i. The following brothers were appointed by Synod 2016 and are eligible to be reappointed for two more terms: from Regional Synod West, Rev. J Poppe and Rev. J. Slaa; from Regional Synod East, Rev. J. Louwerse.
    - ii. The following brother was appointed by Synod 2013 and is eligible for reappointment for one more term: from Regional Synod East, Rev. M. VanLuik;
  - b. To reappoint brs. K. Van Veen and P. Vandersluis as Governors for a term lasting until the second subsequent General Synod.
  - c. To reappoint br. C. Medemblik and F. Oostdyk as Governors for a term lasting from the date of re-appointment until the next subsequent General Synod.
  - d. To appoint one new non-ministerial Governor for a term lasting from the date of appointment until the third subsequent General Synod, with a standby replacement candidate as well. The Board's recommendation for these appointments can be found in a separate letter which also contain curricula vitae.

4. To request the churches to continue to remember in their prayers the needs of Mrs. K. Deddens, Mrs. M. DeJong, Dr. and Mrs. N.H. Gootjes and Prof. J. Geertsema.
5. To appoint Dr. J. VanVliet as Principal for the years 2019-2022;
6. To approve the change to the By-laws described in this report;
7. To maintain the current procedure of granting tenure to professors;
8. To approve all other decisions and actions of the Board and of its committees for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 until the date of this Report;
9. To express gratitude for the support from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.
10. To consider the audited financial statements and the report of the Auditors for the previous fiscal periods; to relieve the Treasurer of the Board of all responsibilities for these fiscal periods; to support and recommend the reappointment of DBK Accounting as Auditor until the next General Synod, subject to the discretion and direction of the Board.
11. To acknowledge with gratitude the financial contributions of the Women's Savings Action to the well-being of the Seminary.

**The Appendices of this report are listed below and are attached hereto:**

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Annual Reports of the Finance and Property Committee for 2016, 2017 & 2018   |
| Appendix 2 | Audited Financial Statements for CRTS for the fiscal years ended December 31 <sup>st</sup> for each of 2015, 2016 & 2017 |
| Appendix 3 | Relevant Portions of the CRTS Handbook   |

## **Appendix 1**

### **Annual Reports of the Finance and Property Committee**

**2016**

**2017**

**2018**

September 8, 2016

The Board of Governors of the Theological College  
Of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
(operating as the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)

Esteemed Brothers:

The Finance and Property Committee (the “committee”) of the Board of the CRTS of the Canadian Reformed Churches is pleased to submit the Thirty Fifth Annual Report covering the period June 10, 2015 to June 12, 2016.

### 1. General Activities

The committee is pleased to report that the Lord enabled the members to meet four times over the year under review [November 2015, January 2016, March 2016 and June of 2016]. The committee consisted of A. Bax, Chairman, B. Hordyk, Secretary, H. C. Kampen, Treasurer and two members at large, C. Medemblik and F. Oostdyk. At the June 2016 meeting the two new members appointed by General Synod 2016 were in attendance, P. Vandersluis and K. Van Veen. At the same meeting A. Bax and H.C. Kampen were thanked for all their contribution to the committee during their respective terms. F. Oostdyk was chosen as the new Chairman and C. Medemblik as the new Treasurer.

Consistent with our bylaws, all of the meetings were attended by the Principal, Dr. G.H. Visscher.

The minutes of our meetings have been circulated to the Deputies for the Training for the Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

### 2. Physical Property and Maintenance

The facilities of the Seminary continue to serve the community of the Seminary and broader church community very well.

In addition to routine maintenance, the following projects were attended to:

- a. Proposals have been received for a retaining wall along the north side walkway and a south side walkway as required for emergency exit. A patio is also being considered for the south side when the sidewalk is installed.
- b. Review of the flat roof over the admin section of the building. Engineering proposals for further study are being requested.

### 3. Finances relating to the Faculty and Staff

Consistent with Synod directives the salaries were reviewed. Adjustments were made to maintain Synod’s intent that these salaries provide a disposable income comparable to that of ministers in the Hamilton/Burlington area. The result was an approximately 1.9% increase in salaries for 2016

At present support is provided to four professors emeritus [Dr. C. Van Dam, Dr. N.H. Gootjes Prof G. Geertsema and Dr J. DeJong]. Support also continues for Mrs. Faber, widow of the late Dr. J. Faber.

Ms. Catharine Mechelse (Office Administrator) and Mrs. Leanne Kuizenga (Part-time Faculty Administrative Assistant) continue to serve us well. Mrs. Kuizenga is increasing her part-time commitment to four days per week and will be taking on additional bookkeeping responsibilities.

Mrs. Margaret Alkema continues to serve us as our Librarian, and plays a significant role in coordinating matters at the Seminary in regard to our accreditation with the Association of Theological Schools. She currently serves as Assessment Coordinator.

The staff salaries were reviewed and adjusted in accordance with the established schedules. Annual performance reviews were completed for all support staff.

A review of staff salary and benefits was undertaken. As a result some modifications to the salary grid were approved. The compensation for the librarian was also adjusted in consideration of the additional responsibilities she has. A review of benefits is also planned in the coming months.

#### 4. Finances

It is with deep gratitude and thankfulness that the churches continue their support of the Seminary faithfully. We note in particular the ongoing substantial support of our sister churches in Australia. Mr. Henry Salomons, C.A. continued as our auditor for the fiscal period ending December 31, 2015 and financial statements were issued and filed for such period. Mr. Salomons has been appointed our auditor for the fiscal period ending December 31, 2016.

You will have received the financial statements for the period ending December 31, 2015 and the budget for fiscal 2016.

The Seminary remains in good standing with the Canada Revenue Agency and maintains its status as a charitable institution.

5. Tuition Fees

The tuition fees for the academic year starting September 2016 are \$2,100.00 for the Diploma of Theological Studies and \$2,200 for the Bachelor of Theological program. The fees for part-time courses are raised to \$80 per credit hour.

6. Budget

A draft budget for 2016 was presented to the Board of Governors and approved at their meeting of September 10, 2015. The 2016 budget includes an increase in the assessments to the churches of about 3.8% going from \$82.00 to \$85.00 per communicant member. The 2017 budget includes an increase in assessments to the churches for 2017 of about 5.9% going from \$85.00 to \$90 per communicant member.

7. Conclusion

With thankfulness and in humility we render all honour and glory to Christ, the Head of the Church, who again was pleased to enable the entire Seminary community to work for the benefit of our congregations, especially in Canada, the Unites States, Australia and abroad in the mission fields.

This report is respectfully submitted this 8<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2016, A. D.

With Brotherly Greetings

Yours in Christ

The Finance and Property Committee

Of the Board of Governors

Of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

September 6, 2018

The Board of Governors of the Theological College Of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
(operating as the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)

Esteemed Brothers:

The Finance and Property Committee (the “committee”) of the Board of the CRTS of the Canadian Reformed Churches is pleased to submit the Thirty Sixth Annual Report covering the period June 12, 2016 to June 13, 2017.

### 1. General Activities

The committee is pleased to report that the Lord enabled the members to meet five times over the year under review [June 2016, September 2016, November 2016, March 2017 and June 2017]. The committee consisted of F. Oostdyk, Chairman, B. Hordyk, Secretary, C. Medemblik, Treasurer and two members at large, P. Vandersluis and K. Van Veen.

Consistent with our bylaws, all of the meetings were attended by the Principal of the Seminary, Dr. G.H. Visscher.

The minutes of our meetings have been circulated to the Deputies for the Training for the Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

### 2. Physical Property and Maintenance

The facilities of the Seminary continue to serve the community of the Seminary and broader church community very well.

In addition to routine maintenance, the following projects were attended to:

- a. Walkway replacement
- b. External security lighting upgrades
- c. Roof repairs and maintenance

In order to ensure the facilities are properly maintained, ongoing review and upkeep was completed.

The committee also intends to retain the services of an architectural firm to conduct a facilities audit to assist in budgeting and planning purposes.

### 3. Finances relating to the Faculty and Staff

Consistent with Synod directives the salaries were reviewed. Adjustments were made to maintain Synod’s intent that these salaries provide a disposable income comparable to that of ministers in the Hamilton/Burlington area. The result was an approximately 1.9% increase in salaries for 2017.

In the 2016 financial year, support was provided to five professors emeritus [Dr. C. Van Dam, Dr. N.H. Gootjes Prof G. Geertsema and Dr J. DeJong] along with ongoing support for sr. Faber, widow of the late Dr. J. Faber.

Ms. Catharine Mechelse (Office Administrator), Mrs. Leanne Kuizenga (Part-time Faculty Administrative Assistant) and Mrs. Margaret Alkema (Librarian) continue to serve us well in their competent support of our seminary, ensuring the organization and various committees run smoothly.

The staff salaries were reviewed and adjusted in accordance with the established schedules and annual performance reviews were completed for all support staff.

#### 4. Finances

It is with deep gratitude and thankfulness that the churches continue their support of the Seminary faithfully. We note in particular the ongoing substantial support of our sister churches in Australia. Mr. Henry Salomons, C.A. continued as our auditor for the fiscal period ending December 31, 2016 and financial statements were issued and filed for such period. Mr. Salomons had also been appointed our auditor for the fiscal period ending December 31, 2017.

You will have received the financial statements for the period ending December 31, 2016 and the budget for fiscal 2017.

The Seminary remains in good standing with the Canada Revenue Agency and maintains its status as a charitable institution.

#### 5. Tuition Fees

The tuition fees for the academic year starting September 2017 are \$2,100.00 for the Diploma of Theological Studies and \$2,200 for the Bachelor of Theological program and \$2,300.00 for Masters of Divinity program. The fees for part-time courses remained \$80 per credit hour.

#### 6. Budget

A draft budget for 2017 was presented to the Board of Governors and approved at their meeting of September 7, 2016. The 2017 budget resulted in no change to the assessments to the churches at \$90 per communicant member. The 2018 budget also resulted in no change to the assessments to the churches, remaining at \$90.00 per communicant member.

#### 7. Conclusion

With thankfulness and in humility we render all honour and glory to Christ, the Head of the Church, who again was pleased to enable the entire Seminary community to work for the benefit of our congregations, especially in Canada, the United States, Australia and abroad in the mission fields.

This report is respectfully submitted this 6th day of September, 2018, A. D. with brotherly greetings.

Yours in Christ

The Finance and Property Committee Of the Board of Governors  
Of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

September 6, 2018

The Board of Governors of the Theological College Of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
(operating as the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)

Esteemed Brothers:

The Finance and Property Committee (the “committee”) of the Board of the CRTS of the Canadian Reformed Churches is pleased to submit the Thirty Seventh Annual Report covering the period June 13, 2017 to June 18, 2018.

### 1. General Activities

The committee is pleased to report that the Lord enabled the members to meet six times over the year under review [June 2017, September 2017, December 2017, January 2018, April 2018 and June 2018]. The committee consisted of F. Oostdyk, Chairman, B. Hordyk, Secretary, C. Medemblik, Treasurer and two members at large, P. Vandersluis and K. Van Veen. In September 2017, br. K. Van Veen assumed the Secretary duties from B. Hordyk.

Consistent with our bylaws, all of the meetings were attended by the Principal of the Seminary. Dr. G.H. Visscher attended as Principal for the June 2017 and was accompanied by Dr. J. Van Vliet for the meeting of September 2017. For the meetings of April and June 2018 Dr. A. de Visser, as acting principal during Dr. Van Vliet’s sabbatical, also attended the meetings.

The minutes of our meetings have been circulated to the Deputies for the Training for the Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

### 2. Physical Property and Maintenance

The facilities of the Seminary continue to serve the community of the Seminary and broader church community very well.

In addition to routine maintenance, the following projects were attended to:

- a. Chapel roof replacement
- b. Library humidification system was replaced
- c. Piano purchased for the chapel

In order to ensure the facilities are properly maintained and capital expenses can be adequately planned and budgeted, the committee has retained the services of Grinham Architects of Guelph to conduct a comprehensive facilities review. It is the expectation that this review will be initiated in late 2018.

### 3. Finances relating to the Faculty and Staff

Consistent with Synod directives the salaries were reviewed. Adjustments were made to maintain Synod’s intent that these salaries provide a disposable income comparable to that of ministers in the Hamilton/Burlington area. The result was an approximately 2.05% increase in salaries for 2018.

In the past financial year, support was provided to four professors emeritus [Dr. C. Van Dam, Dr. N.H. Gootjes Prof G. Geertsema and Dr J. DeJong]. On April 15, 2017, our Lord took br. DeJong into glory and as such our support of sr. DeJong will continue. Our support was also provided to our sr. Faber, widow of the late Dr. J. Faber until June 30, 2018 when she too was taken home to be with our Lord and Saviour.

Ms. Catharine Mechelse (Office Administrator), Mrs. Leanne Kuizenga (Part-time Faculty Administrative Assistant) and Mrs. Margaret Alkema (Librarian) continue to serve us well in their competent support of our seminary, ensuring the organization and various committees run smoothly.

The staff salaries were reviewed and adjusted in accordance with the established schedules and annual performance reviews were completed for all support staff.

#### 4. Finances

It is with deep gratitude and thankfulness that the churches continue their support of the Seminary faithfully. We note in particular the ongoing substantial support of our sister churches in Australia. In November 2017 we received notification from Mr. Henry Salomons, C.A. that his services as auditor were no longer offered and new auditors needed to be appointed. In order to continue to function with audited financial statements, research for appropriate auditors was conducted and a proposal was tabled and approved at the January 11, 2018 Board of Governors meeting appointing DBK Accounting of Hamilton as auditors for the fiscal period ending December 31, 2017. Financial statements were issued and filed for such period.

You will have received the financial statements for the period ending December 31, 2017 and the budget for fiscal 2018.

The Seminary remains in good standing with the Canada Revenue Agency and maintains its status as a charitable institution.

#### 5. Tuition Fees

The tuition fees for the academic year starting September 2018 are \$2,100.00 for the Diploma of Theological Studies and \$2,200 for the Bachelor of Theological program and \$2,300.00 for Masters of Divinity program. The fees for part-time courses remained \$80 per credit hour.

#### 6. Budget

A draft budget for 2018 was presented to the Board of Governors and approved at their meeting of September 7, 2017. The 2018 budget resulted in no change to the assessments to the churches at \$90 per communicant member. The 2019 budget was also able to maintain the assessments to the churches at \$90.00 per communicant member.

#### 7. Conclusion

With thankfulness and in humility we render all honour and glory to Christ, the Head of the Church, who again was pleased to enable the entire Seminary community to work for the benefit of our congregations, especially in Canada, the Unites States, Australia and abroad in the mission fields. This report is respectfully submitted this 6th day of September, 2018, A. D. with brotherly greetings.

Yours in Christ

The Finance and Property Committee Of the Board of Governors  
Of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

**Appendix 2**

**Audited Financial Statements for CRTS  
for the fiscal years ended December 31<sup>st</sup> for each of**

**2015**

**2016**

**2017**

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE**  
**of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**DECEMBER 31, 2015**



Henry Salomons, CPA  
Professional Corporation

Chartered Professional Accountant

[www.henrycpa.ca](http://www.henrycpa.ca)

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**DECEMBER 31, 2015**

---

<u>INDEX</u>	<u>Page</u>
Audit Report	1 - 2
Statement of Financial Position	3
Statement of Fund Operations	4
Statement of Changes in Net Assets	5
Statement of Cash Flows	6
Expenditures Detail - General Fund	7
Notes to the Financial Statements	8 - 14





## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

### **To the Governors of The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches (Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary):**

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches (operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary), which comprise the statement of financial position as at December 31, 2015, the statements of operations and net assets and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

### **Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements**

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### **Auditor's Responsibility**

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained in my audit is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

**Opinion**

In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches (operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary) as at December 31, 2015 and its results of operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

**BEAMSVILLE, Canada  
June 21, 2016**

**HENRY SALOMONS, CPA  
PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION  
LICENSED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT**



THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
 (Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)  
 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
 AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2015

	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Bursary Funds</u>	<u>Publication Foundation</u>	<u>Library Fund</u>	<u>Sabbatical Fund</u>	<u>Dec 31, 2015</u>	<u>Dec 31, 2014</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>							
<b>Current assets</b>							
Cash and cash equivalents	29,279	33,946	12,149	829	2,833	79,036	105,737
Term deposits (Note 4)	178,413	116,043	8,111	-	-	302,567	267,669
Trade and other receivables	22,137	20,219	2,407	-	-	44,763	56,164
Government sales taxes refundable	6,952	-	-	-	-	6,952	12,292
Prepaid expenses and sundry assets	51,460	-	-	-	-	51,460	49,305
Interfund amounts receivable (Note 5)	-	-	77	1,174	11,180	-	-
	<b>288,241</b>	<b>170,208</b>	<b>22,744</b>	<b>2,003</b>	<b>14,013</b>	<b>484,778</b>	<b>491,167</b>
Investments (Note 4)	106,116	150,025	-	-	-	256,141	350,173
Capital assets (Note 6)	1,429,921	-	-	-	-	1,429,921	1,459,710
Reference collection (Note 6)	-	-	-	127,167	-	127,167	126,816
	<b>1,824,278</b>	<b>320,233</b>	<b>22,744</b>	<b>129,170</b>	<b>14,013</b>	<b>2,298,007</b>	<b>2,427,866</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>							
<b>Current liabilities</b>							
Accounts payables and accrued liability	17,452	-	-	-	-	17,452	22,029
Government remittances payable	19,596	-	-	-	-	19,596	1,389
Deferred revenue	21,311	-	-	-	-	21,311	17,036
Interfund amounts (Note 5)	12,431	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>70,790</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>58,359</b>	<b>40,454</b>
Deferred capital contributions (Note 7)	2,164	-	-	-	-	2,164	3,230
	<b>72,954</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>60,523</b>	<b>43,684</b>
<b>Net assets</b>							
Invested in capital assets	1,427,757	-	-	127,167	-	1,554,924	1,586,526
Externally restricted	-	320,233	22,744	-	-	342,977	349,559
Internally restricted	-	-	-	2,003	14,013	16,016	33,993
Unrestricted	323,567	-	-	-	-	323,567	414,104
	<b>1,751,324</b>	<b>320,233</b>	<b>22,744</b>	<b>129,170</b>	<b>14,013</b>	<b>2,237,484</b>	<b>2,384,182</b>
	<b>1,824,278</b>	<b>320,233</b>	<b>22,744</b>	<b>129,170</b>	<b>14,013</b>	<b>2,298,007</b>	<b>2,427,866</b>

The attached notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these statements

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_ Governor

\_\_\_\_\_ Governor

THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
 (Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)  
 STATEMENT OF FUND OPERATIONS  
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015

	2015 General Budget (unaudited)	General Fund	Bursary Funds	Publication Foundation	Library Fund	Sabbatical Fund	Total 2015	Total 2014
<b>REVENUE</b>								
Allotments from churches	896,000	889,590	-	-	-	-	889,590	849,933
Gifts and collections	30,000	2,705	850	-	-	-	3,555	46,520
Gifts - Sister churches	165,400	152,960	-	-	-	-	152,960	160,718
Student fees	41,400	44,910	-	-	-	-	44,910	41,880
Superannuation pension	147,000	148,957	-	-	-	-	148,957	145,466
Women's Savings Action	35,000	35,000	-	-	-	-	35,000	37,000
Sundry and investment income	5,000	5,252	3,291	4,648	-	-	13,191	13,501
	<u>1,319,800</u>	<u>1,279,374</u>	<u>4,141</u>	<u>4,648</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,288,163</u>	<u>1,295,018</u>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>								
Faculty	964,200	1,017,538	-	-	-	-	1,017,538	930,431
Property	71,000	72,790	-	-	-	-	72,790	68,511
Administration	144,100	149,056	113	-	-	84	149,253	151,137
Library	85,500	88,771	-	-	-	-	88,771	100,852
Subscriptions	-	-	-	-	21,820	-	21,820	17,979
Depreciation capital assets	-	43,694	-	-	25,709	-	69,403	69,748
Bursaries paid out	-	-	14,045	-	-	-	14,045	2,075
Publication costs	-	28	-	1,213	-	-	1,241	24,101
Sabbatical costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,000
	<u>1,264,800</u>	<u>1,371,877</u>	<u>14,158</u>	<u>1,213</u>	<u>47,529</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>1,434,861</u>	<u>1,369,834</u>
<b>Excess of revenues over expenditures</b>	<u>55,000</u>	<u>(92,503)</u>	<u>(10,017)</u>	<u>3,435</u>	<u>(47,529)</u>	<u>(84)</u>	<u>(146,698)</u>	<u>(74,816)</u>

The attached notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these statements

THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
 (Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)  
 STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS  
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015

	Unrestricted		Externally restricted		Internally restricted			Total 2015	Total 2014
	General Fund	Invested in Capital Assets	Bursary Funds	Publication Foundation	Capital Fund	Library Fund	Sabbatical Fund		
Balance, beginning of year	414,104	1,586,526	330,250	19,309	10,012	9,884	14,097	2,384,182	2,458,998
Excess of revenues over expenditures	(92,503)	-	(10,017)	3,435	-	(47,529)	(84)	(146,698)	(74,816)
Purchase of capital assets	(14,970)	41,031	-	-	-	(26,061)	-	-	-
Deferred capital contributions	2,164	(2,164)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Interfund transfers									
Budget appropriations	(40,000)	-	-	-	-	40,000	-	-	-
Depreciation of capital assets	44,760	(70,469)	-	-	-	25,709	-	-	-
Transfers	10,012	-	-	-	(10,012)	-	-	-	-
Balance, end of year	<u>323,567</u>	<u>1,554,924</u>	<u>320,233</u>	<u>22,744</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,003</u>	<u>14,013</u>	<u>2,237,484</u>	<u>2,384,182</u>

*The attached notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these statements*

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015**

	2015	2014
	\$	\$
<b>Cash flows from operations</b>		
Excess of revenue over expenditures	(146,698)	(74,816)
Non-cash items		
Depreciation	69,403	69,748
	(77,295)	(5,068)
Change in non-cash operating working capital		
Term deposits	(34,898)	83,951
Trade and other receivables	11,401	(7,509)
Government sales taxes refundable	5,340	3,727
Prepays	(2,155)	(2,806)
Accounts payables and accrued liability	(4,578)	(6,740)
Government remittances payable	18,207	99
Deferred revenue	4,275	5,536
	(79,703)	71,190
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of capital assets	(14,970)	(6,703)
Purchase of reference collection	(26,060)	(23,850)
Redemption (acquisition) of investments	94,032	(107,501)
	53,002	(138,054)
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>		
Deferred capital contributions	-	3,230
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	(26,701)	(63,634)
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	105,737	169,371
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	79,036	105,737
Interest received	11,388	6,588

*The attached notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these statements*



**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**EXPENDITURE DETAIL - GENERAL FUND**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2015**

	<u>2015</u> <u>Budget</u> (unaudited)	<u>2015</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>2014</u> <u>Actual</u>
<b>Faculty</b>			
Salaries - professors	512,700	512,710	503,071
Pension - professors	263,000	265,208	245,298
Employee benefits	115,000	170,144	108,078
Superannuation	50,500	50,373	45,794
Professional development	15,500	15,393	19,840
Extra teaching staff	7,500	3,710	8,350
	<u>964,200</u>	<u>1,017,538</u>	<u>930,431</u>
<b>Property</b>			
Caretaking, maintenance, and security	45,000	44,873	43,260
Building Improvements	-	1,828	294
Insurance	8,000	8,495	7,975
Utilities	18,000	17,594	16,982
	<u>71,000</u>	<u>72,790</u>	<u>68,511</u>
<b>Administration</b>			
Travel and meetings	13,000	14,127	13,698
Office supplies and general	8,000	5,462	5,269
Salary - administrative assistants	81,500	82,726	77,554
Employee benefits	13,000	12,922	12,439
Professional services	9,000	9,099	8,531
Telephone	2,400	1,871	1,946
Accreditation	3,000	5,497	4,625
Bank charges and interest	2,000	1,380	1,768
Office equipment maintenance and rental	1,200	730	1,579
Public relations	11,000	13,176	15,297
Web-site	-	2,066	8,264
	<u>144,100</u>	<u>149,056</u>	<u>150,970</u>
<b>Library</b>			
Supplies	2,000	1,818	3,299
Salary - librarian	71,000	70,841	69,510
Employee benefits	12,500	12,065	11,315
Software	-	4,047	16,728
	<u>85,500</u>	<u>88,771</u>	<u>100,852</u>
<b>Total General Fund</b>	<u><u>1,264,800</u></u>	<u><u>1,328,155</u></u>	<u><u>1,250,764</u></u>

*The attached notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these statements*



**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2015**

---

**1. Purpose of the Organization**

The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the "College", which operates by authority of the Theological College of Canadian Reformed Churches Act, 1981, provides training for the ministry. As a registered charity, the College is exempt from income tax and may issue receipts for charitable donations.

**2. Significant Accounting Policies**

The financial statements were prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations in Part III of the CPA Canadian Handbook and include the following significant accounting policies:

***Fund Accounting***

Revenues and expenses for the College's general operations are reported in the General Fund.

Bursary Contributions are reported in the Bursary Fund (Faber-Holwerda Bursary, Selles Bursary, and Foreign Student Bursary). Interest income is reported in the Bursary Fund.

Revenues and expenses related to publishing theological works are reported in the Publication Foundation Fund. Interest income is reported in the Publication Foundation Fund.

The Capital Fund reports the assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses related to capital assets.

Revenues and expenses related to library disbursements (including the Book Centre) are reported in the Library Fund.

The Sabbatical Fund accounts for the costs associated with sabbaticals granted to the professors.

***Revenue Recognition***

The College follows the restricted fund method of accounting for contributions. Restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are incurred. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when they are received. Allotments from churches are recognized as revenue in the year they are assessed.

Investment income in the Bursary Fund and Publication Foundation Fund includes interest income and realized investment gains and losses on sale of investments.

Unrestricted interest income is recognized as revenue when earned.

THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)  
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2015

---

2. Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

*Revenue Recognition*

Tuition fees related to academic terms occurring after December 31st are recorded as deferred revenue.

The College is named as a beneficiary in certain wills. Revenue on these arrangements, whether interest or capital, is recognized on receipt.

*Capital Assets*

Capital assets are recorded at cost. The building, parking lot, computer equipment, and furniture and fixtures are amortized using the straight-line method at the following rates:

Building	2.5%
Parking Lot	10.0%
Computer equipment	33.3%
Other equipment, furniture and fixtures	10.0%
Reference collection	10.0%

*Reference collection*

The College maintains a collection of reference books. These books are recognized at cost. Included in the collection are a number of books that the College considers to be rare and precious and do not depreciate in value. The costs to obtain these books are not amortized and are recorded at \$ 2,547 (2014 - \$ 2,547).

*Employee future benefits*

Faculty are covered by a defined benefit multiemployer pension plan for which contributions are recognized as a salary expense in the income statement. Participation in this plan is mandatory and is based on an established assessment criteria. Benefits and contributions are determined and administered by the Foundation for Superannuation of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Since the College does not control the plan, it is not possible to estimate the potential contributions that could be required to fund the College's proportionate share of the plan's unfunded vested benefit. Thus, the College is unable to account for this plan as a defined benefit plan and uses defined contribution plan accounting instead.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2015**

---

**2. Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**

*Employee future benefits (continued)*

The College also makes regular contributions to a Group Registered Retirement Savings Plan ("RRSP") administered by a third party, on behalf of each eligible employee. Group RRSP contributions are charged to operations in the year made.

*Financial Instruments*

The College initially measures its financial assets and financial liabilities at fair value. The College subsequently measures all its financial assets and financial liabilities at amortized cost.

Financial assets measured at amortized cost include cash, trade and other receivables, government remittances receivable, prepaids, and investments.

Financial liabilities measured at amortized cost include accounts payable and accrued liabilities and government remittances payable.

*Cash and cash equivalents*

The College's policy is to present bank balances and term deposits with a maturity period of 3 months or less from the date of acquisition under cash and cash equivalents. No term deposits are included in the current and prior year cash.

*Contributed services*

Because of the difficulty of determining the fair value, contributed goods and services are not recognized in the financial statements.

*Estimates*

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the dates of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenditures during the year. Actual results could differ from those estimates. Balances for which estimates were used are capital assets (depreciation) and accrued liabilities.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2015**

---

**3. Interfund Transfers**

In order to fund disbursements and to offset capital asset acquisitions, the following transfers were made. These internally restricted amounts are not available for any other purpose without the approval of the Board of Governors.

	2015	2014
	\$	\$
Capital fund	(10,012)	15,000
Library fund	40,000	40,000
Sabbatical fund	-	10,000
Transfer from General fund	<u>29,988</u>	<u>65,000</u>

**4. Investments**

	2015	2014
	\$	\$
General Fund: Term deposits, 1.2% to 1.8%, maturing September, 2015 to October, 2016, measured at amortized cost	284,529	312,790
Bursary Fund: Term deposits, 1.1% to 2.95%, maturing February, 2015 to February, 2019, measured at amortized cost	243,869	274,806
Bursary Fund: Marketable securities, maturing November 19, 2016, measured at amortized cost. Fair market value is \$39,874 (2013 - \$38,987)	22,199	22,199
Publication Fund: Term deposit, 0.8%, maturing November, 2015, measured at amortized cost	<u>8,111</u>	<u>8,047</u>
	<b>558,708</b>	<b>617,842</b>
Less: current portion	<u>302,567</u>	<u>267,669</u>
	<u><b>256,141</b></u>	<u><b>350,173</b></u>

**5. Interfund Amounts Receivable**

Interfund amounts receivable bear no interest and are not governed by terms of repayment.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2015**

**6. Capital Assets**

	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Accumulated Depreciation</b>	<b>2015 Net Book Value</b>	<b>2014 Net Book Value</b>
			<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Land	305,110	-	305,110	305,110
Building	1,135,530	85,165	1,050,365	1,078,753
Parking lot	34,365	7,679	26,686	19,075
Computer equipment	43,646	36,073	7,573	7,604
Equipment and furniture	256,631	216,444	40,187	49,168
	<b>1,775,282</b>	<b>345,361</b>	<b>1,429,921</b>	<b>1,459,710</b>
Reference collection	<b>744,360</b>	<b>617,193</b>	<b>127,167</b>	<b>129,086</b>
Additions:				
Parking lot			10,521	-
Computer equipment			4,449	6,704
Equipment and furniture			-	-
Reference collection			26,061	23,850
			<b>41,031</b>	<b>30,554</b>

**7. Deferred Capital Contributions**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Balance, beginning of the year	3,230	-
Plus amounts received related to capital additions	-	3,230
Less amounts amortized to revenue	(1,066)	-
Balance, end of the year	<b>2,164</b>	<b>3,230</b>

Deferred capital contributions represent the unamortized amount of donations received for the purchase of capital assets. Amortization of deferred capital contributions is recorded in sundry and investment income on the statement of revenue and expenditures.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2015**

---

**8. Related Party Transactions**

The College is operated by a Federation of Churches, and solicits revenues and procures goods and services from members of these Churches at market rates.

The College has provided loans to current and retired professors to assist with the purchase of housing or special circumstances.

At year end the amount of loans receivable (included in trade and other receivables) owing from the current and retired professors was as follows:

	2015	2014
	\$	\$
Loans receivable	<u>16,254</u>	<u>19,135</u>

**9. Financial Instruments**

The College is exposed to various risks through its financial instruments. The following analysis presents the College's exposure to significant risk at the reporting date December 31, 2015.

Credit risk

The College is exposed to credit risk with respect to term deposits, trade and other receivables and government remittances receivable. The College assesses, on a continuous basis, trade and other receivables on the basis of amounts it is virtually certain to receive. The credit risk with respect to term deposits is insignificant since they are held in large financial institutions.

Interest rate risk

The College is exposed to interest rate risk on its fixed interest rate financial instruments. Fixed rate instruments subject the College to risk of changes in fair value. The College is exposed to this type of risk as a result of its investments. However, the risk associated with investments is reduced to a minimum since these assets are invested in guaranteed income certificates.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2015**

**10. Bursary Funds**

	<u>Foreign Students</u>	<u>Other Bursaries</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
			\$	\$
Balance, beginning of year	235,981	94,269	330,250	326,091
Contributions	50	800	850	700
Investment income	5,121	170	5,291	5,617
	<u>241,152</u>	<u>95,239</u>	<u>336,391</u>	<u>332,408</u>
Bursaries paid out	(12,195)	(1,850)	(14,045)	(2,075)
Operating expenditures	(88)	(25)	(113)	(83)
Balance, end of year	<u><b>228,869</b></u>	<u><b>93,364</b></u>	<u><b>322,233</b></u>	<u><b>330,250</b></u>
<b>As follows:</b>				
Cash	15,909	2,994	18,903	10,738
Investments	209,005	72,106	281,111	297,004
Interest receivable	1,955	18,264	20,219	22,508
	<u><b>226,869</b></u>	<u><b>93,364</b></u>	<u><b>320,233</b></u>	<u><b>330,250</b></u>

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE**  
**of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**DECEMBER 31, 2016**

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**DECEMBER 31, 2016**

---

<b><u>INDEX</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Audit Report	1 - 2
Statement of Financial Position	3
Statement of Fund Operations	4
Statement of Changes in Net Assets	5
Statement of Cash Flows	6
Expenditures Detail - General Fund	7
Notes to the Financial Statements	8 - 14



## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

### **To the Governors of The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches (Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary):**

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches (operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary), which comprise the statement of financial position as at December 31, 2016, the statements of operations and net assets and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

### **Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements**

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### **Auditor's Responsibility**

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

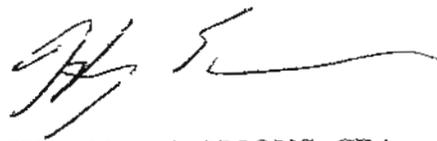
An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained in my audit is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

### **Opinion**

In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches (operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary) as at December 31, 2016 and its results of operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

**BEAMSVILLE, Canada**  
**June 5, 2017**



**HENRY SALOMONS, CPA**  
**PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION**  
**LICENSED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT**

	General Fund	Bursary Funds	Publication Foundation	Library Fund	Dec 31, 2016	Dec 31, 2015
<b>ASSETS</b>						
<b>Current assets</b>						
Cash and cash equivalents	116,774	11,823	21,514	2,817	152,928	79,036
Term deposits (Note 4)	81,931	156,300	-	-	238,231	302,567
Trade and other receivables	27,504	4,817	1,600	-	33,921	44,763
Government sales taxes refundable	5,160	12	173	766	6,111	6,952
Prepaid expenses and sundry assets	877	-	-	-	877	51,460
Interfund amounts receivable (Note 5)	-	-	-	-	-	12,431
	<u>232,246</u>	<u>172,952</u>	<u>23,287</u>	<u>3,583</u>	<u>432,068</u>	<u>497,209</u>
Investments (Note 4)	150,000	143,378	-	-	293,378	256,141
Capital assets (Note 6)	1,396,246	-	-	-	1,396,246	1,429,921
Reference collection (Note 6)	-	-	-	117,738	117,738	127,167
	<u>1,778,492</u>	<u>316,330</u>	<u>23,287</u>	<u>121,321</u>	<u>2,239,430</u>	<u>2,310,438</u>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>						
<b>Current liabilities</b>						
Accounts payables and accrued liabilities	13,645	-	175	-	13,820	17,452
Government remittances payable	20,074	-	-	-	20,074	19,596
Deferred revenue	21,454	-	-	-	21,454	21,311
Interfund amounts payable (Note 5)	-	-	-	-	-	12,431
	<u>55,173</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>55,348</u>	<u>70,790</u>
Deferred capital contributions (Note 7)	1,098	-	-	-	1,098	2,164
	<u>56,271</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>56,446</u>	<u>72,954</u>
<b>Net assets</b>						
Invested in capital assets	1,395,148	-	-	117,738	1,512,886	1,554,924
Externally restricted	-	316,330	23,112	-	339,442	342,977
Internally restricted	-	-	-	3,583	3,583	16,016
Unrestricted	327,073	-	-	-	327,073	323,567
	<u>1,722,221</u>	<u>316,330</u>	<u>23,112</u>	<u>121,321</u>	<u>2,182,984</u>	<u>2,237,484</u>
	<u>1,778,492</u>	<u>316,330</u>	<u>23,287</u>	<u>121,321</u>	<u>2,239,430</u>	<u>2,310,438</u>

The attached notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these statements

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Governor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Governor

THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)

STATEMENT OF FUND OPERATIONS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2016

	2016 General Budget (unaudited)	General Fund	Bursary Funds	Publication Foundation	Library Fund	Total 2016	Total 2015
<b>REVENUE</b>							
Allotments from churches	935,000	939,694	-	-	-	939,694	889,590
Gifts and collections	45,000	23,945	950	3,357	-	28,252	3,555
Gifts - sister churches	207,920	207,860	-	-	-	207,860	152,960
Student fees	40,250	42,070	-	-	-	42,070	44,910
Superannuation pension	151,700	150,447	-	-	-	150,447	148,957
Women's Savings Action	35,000	35,000	-	-	-	35,000	35,000
Sundry and investment income	6,000	7,682	5,369	735	-	13,786	13,191
	<b>1,420,870</b>	<b>1,406,698</b>	<b>6,319</b>	<b>4,092</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,417,109</b>	<b>1,288,163</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>							
Faculty	1,049,815	1,036,148	-	-	-	1,036,148	1,017,538
Property	69,075	65,140	-	-	-	65,140	72,790
Administration	167,662	155,706	92	25	242	156,065	149,253
Library	89,318	101,574	-	-	-	101,574	88,771
Subscriptions	40,000	-	-	-	22,589	22,589	21,820
Depreciation of capital assets	-	44,897	-	-	25,018	69,915	69,403
Bursaries paid out	-	-	10,130	-	-	10,130	14,045
Publication costs	-	-	-	3,699	-	3,699	1,241
Sabbatical costs	5,000	6,349	-	-	-	6,349	-
	<b>1,420,870</b>	<b>1,409,814</b>	<b>10,222</b>	<b>3,724</b>	<b>47,849</b>	<b>1,471,609</b>	<b>1,434,861</b>
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenditures	-	(3,116)	(3,903)	368	(47,849)	(54,500)	(146,698)

*The attached notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these statements*

THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches  
 (Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)  
 STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS  
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2016

	Unrestricted		Externally restricted		Internally restricted		Total 2016	Total 2015
	General Fund	Invested in Capital Assets	Bursary Funds	Publication Foundation	Library Fund	Sabbatical Fund		
Balance, beginning of year	323,567	1,554,924	320,233	22,744	2,003	14,013	2,237,484	2,384,182
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenditures	(3,116)	-	(3,903)	368	(47,849)	-	(54,500)	(146,698)
Purchase of capital assets	(12,288)	27,877	-	-	(15,589)	-	-	-
Deferred capital contributions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Interfund transfers</b>								
Budget appropriations	(40,000)	-	-	-	40,000	-	-	-
Depreciation of capital assets	44,897	(69,915)	-	-	25,018	-	-	-
Transfers	14,013	-	-	-	-	(14,013)	-	-
Balance, end of year	<u>327,073</u>	<u>1,512,886</u>	<u>316,330</u>	<u>23,112</u>	<u>3,583</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,182,984</u>	<u>2,237,484</u>

*The attached notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these statements*

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2016**

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Cash flows from operations</b>		
Deficiency of revenue over expenditures	(54,500)	(146,698)
Non-cash items		
Depreciation	69,915	69,403
	<u>15,415</u>	<u>(77,295)</u>
Change in non-cash operating working capital		
Term deposits	64,336	(34,898)
Trade and other receivables	10,842	11,401
Government sales taxes refundable	841	5,340
Prepays	50,583	(2,155)
Accounts payables and accrued liabilities	(3,633)	(4,578)
Government remittances payable	478	18,207
Deferred revenue	143	4,275
	<u>139,005</u>	<u>(79,703)</u>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of capital assets	(12,288)	(14,970)
Purchase of reference collection	(15,589)	(26,060)
Redemption (acquisition) of investments	(37,236)	94,032
	<u>(65,113)</u>	<u>53,002</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	73,892	(26,701)
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	<u>79,036</u>	<u>105,737</u>
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	<u><b>152,928</b></u>	<u><b>79,036</b></u>
Interest received	<u>24,257</u>	<u>11,388</u>

*The attached notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these statements*

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**

**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**

**EXPENDITURE DETAIL - GENERAL FUND**

**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2016**

	<b>2016</b> <b><u>Budget</u></b> (unaudited)	<b>2016</b> <b><u>Actual</u></b>	<b>2015</b> <b><u>Actual</u></b>
<b>Faculty</b>			
Salaries - professors	521,905	521,905	512,710
Pension - professors	270,000	270,166	265,208
Employee benefits	179,000	172,734	170,144
Superannuation	55,410	55,410	50,373
Professional development	15,500	8,552	15,393
Extra teaching staff	8,000	7,381	3,710
	<b><u>1,049,815</u></b>	<b><u>1,036,148</u></b>	<b><u>1,017,538</u></b>
<b>Property</b>			
Caretaking, maintenance, and security	40,000	39,849	44,873
Building Improvements	2,575	3,544	1,828
Insurance	8,500	3,033	8,495
Utilities	18,000	18,714	17,594
	<b><u>69,075</u></b>	<b><u>65,140</u></b>	<b><u>72,790</u></b>
<b>Administration</b>			
Travel and meetings	13,000	12,349	14,127
Office supplies and general	10,000	10,508	5,462
Salary - administrative assistants	94,642	86,644	82,726
Employee benefits	13,290	13,264	12,922
Professional services	12,000	9,958	9,099
Telephone	2,400	1,965	1,871
Accreditation	4,000	7,875	5,497
Bank charges and interest	1,830	1,240	1,380
Office equipment maintenance and rental	1,500	894	730
Public relations	15,000	10,549	13,176
Website	-	460	2,066
	<b><u>167,662</u></b>	<b><u>155,706</u></b>	<b><u>149,056</u></b>
<b>Library</b>			
Supplies	-	1,798	1,818
Salary - librarian	72,112	82,929	70,841
Employee benefits	13,206	12,995	12,065
Software	4,000	3,852	4,047
	<b><u>89,318</u></b>	<b><u>101,574</u></b>	<b><u>88,771</u></b>
<b>Total General Fund</b>	<b><u>1,375,870</u></b>	<b><u>1,358,568</u></b>	<b><u>1,328,155</u></b>

*The attached notes to the financial statements are an integral part of these statements*

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**

**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2016**

---

**1. Purpose of the Organization**

The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, (the "College"), which operates by authority of the Theological College of Canadian Reformed Churches Act, 1981, provides training for the ministry. As a registered charity, the College is exempt from income tax and may issue receipts for charitable donations.

**2. Significant Accounting Policies**

The financial statements were prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations in Part III of the CPA Canadian Handbook and include the following significant accounting policies:

***Fund Accounting***

Revenues and expenses for the College's general operations are reported in the General Fund.

Bursary Contributions are reported in the Bursary Fund (Faber-Holwerda Bursary, Selles Bursary, and Foreign Student Bursary). Interest income is reported in the Bursary Fund.

Revenues and expenses related to publishing theological works are reported in the Publication Foundation Fund. Interest income is reported in the Publication Foundation Fund.

The Capital Fund reports the assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses related to capital assets.

Revenues and expenses related to library disbursements (including the Book Centre) are reported in the Library Fund.

The Organization has agreed to close the Sabbatical fund and include the annual costs in the General Fund.

***Revenue Recognition***

The College follows the restricted fund method of accounting for contributions. Restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are incurred. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when they are received. Allotments from churches are recognized as revenue in the year they are assessed.

Investment income in the Bursary Fund and Publication Foundation Fund includes interest income and realized investment gains and losses on sale of investments.

Unrestricted interest income is recognized as revenue when earned.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2016**

---

**2. Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**

***Revenue Recognition (continued)***

Tuition fees related to academic terms occurring after December 31st are recorded as deferred revenue.

The College is named as a beneficiary in certain wills. Revenue on these arrangements, whether interest or capital, is recognized on receipt.

***Capital Assets***

Capital assets are recorded at cost. The building, parking lot, computer equipment, and furniture and fixtures are amortized using the straight-line method at the following rates:

Building	2.5%
Parking lot	10.0%
Computer equipment	33.3%
Other equipment, furniture and fixtures	10.0%
Reference collection	10.0%

***Reference Collection***

The College maintains a collection of reference books. These books are recognized at cost. Included in the collection are a number of books that the College considers to be rare and precious and do not depreciate in value. The costs to obtain these books are not amortized and are recorded at \$ 2,547 (2015 - \$ 2,547).

***Employee Future Benefits***

Faculty are covered by a defined benefit multiemployer pension plan for which contributions are recognized as a salary expense in the income statement. Participation in this plan is mandatory and is based on an established assessment criteria. Benefits and contributions are determined and administered by the Foundation for Superannuation of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Since the College does not control the plan, it is not possible to estimate the potential contributions that could be required to fund the College's proportionate share of the plan's unfunded vested benefit. Thus, the College is unable to account for this plan as a defined benefit plan and uses defined contribution plan accounting instead.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2016**

---

**2. Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**

*Employee Future Benefits (continued)*

The College also makes regular contributions to a group registered retirement savings plan ("RRSP") administered by a third party, on behalf of each eligible employee. Group RRSP contributions are charged to operations in the year made.

*Financial Instruments*

The College initially measures its financial assets and financial liabilities at fair value. The College subsequently measures all its financial assets and financial liabilities at amortized cost.

Financial assets measured at amortized cost include cash, trade and other receivables, government remittances receivable, prepaids, and investments.

Financial liabilities measured at amortized cost include accounts payable and accrued liabilities and government remittances payable.

*Cash and Cash Equivalents*

The College's policy is to present bank balances and term deposits with a maturity period of 3 months or less from the date of acquisition under cash and cash equivalents. No term deposits are included in the current and prior year cash.

*Contributed Services*

Because of the difficulty of determining the fair value, contributed goods and services are not recognized in the financial statements.

*Estimates*

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the dates of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenditures during the year. Actual results could differ from those estimates. Balances for which estimates were used are capital assets (depreciation) and accrued liabilities.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2016**

---

**3. Interfund Transfers**

In order to fund disbursements and to offset capital asset acquisitions, the following transfers were made. These internally restricted amounts are not available for any other purpose without the approval of the Board of Governors.

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>
	\$	\$
Capital fund - closed to general	-	(10,012)
Library fund	40,000	40,000
Sabbatical fund - closed to general	(14,013)	-
Transfer from General fund	<u>25,987</u>	<u>29,988</u>

**4. Investments**

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>
	\$	\$
General Fund: Term deposits, 1.1% to 1.70%, maturing September, 2017 to October, 2018, measured at amortized cost	231,931	284,529
Bursary Fund: Term deposits, 1.2% to 2.55%, maturing June, 2017 to March, 2019, measured at amortized cost	299,678	243,869
Bursary Fund: Marketable securities, maturing November 19, 2016, measured at amortized cost. Fair market value is \$Nil, (2015 - \$39,874)	-	22,199
Publication Fund: Term deposit, 0.8%, maturing November, 2016, measured at amortized cost	-	8,111
	<u>531,609</u>	<u>558,708</u>
Less: current portion	<u>238,231</u>	<u>302,567</u>
	<u>293,378</u>	<u>256,141</u>

**5. Interfund Amounts Receivable**

Interfund amounts receivable bear no interest and are not governed by terms of repayment.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2016**

**6. Capital Assets**

	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Accumulated Depreciation</u>	<u>2016 Net Book Value</u>	<u>2015 Net Book Value</u>
			\$	\$
Land	305,110	-	305,110	305,110
Building	1,135,530	113,553	1,021,977	1,050,365
Parking lot	44,263	11,611	32,652	26,686
Computer equipment	46,036	40,735	5,301	7,573
Equipment and furniture	256,631	225,425	31,206	40,187
	<u>1,787,570</u>	<u>391,324</u>	<u>1,396,246</u>	<u>1,429,921</u>
Reference collection	<u>759,949</u>	<u>642,211</u>	<u>117,738</u>	<u>127,167</u>
Additions:				
Parking lot			9,897	10,521
Computer equipment			2,391	4,449
Reference collection			15,589	26,061
			<u>27,877</u>	<u>41,031</u>

**7. Deferred Capital Contributions**

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>
	\$	\$
Balance, beginning of the year	2,164	3,230
Plus: amounts received related to capital additions	-	-
Less: amounts amortized to revenue	(1,066)	(1,066)
Balance, end of the year	<u>1,098</u>	<u>2,164</u>

Deferred capital contributions represent the unamortized amount of donations received for the purchase of capital assets. Amortization of deferred capital contributions is recorded in sundry and investment income on the statement of revenue and expenditures.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2016**

---

**8. Related Party Transactions**

The College is operated by a Federation of Churches, and solicits revenues and procures goods and services from members of these Churches at market rates.

The College has provided loans to current and retired professors to assist with the purchase of housing or special circumstances.

At year end the amount of loans receivable (included in trade and other receivables) owing from the current and retired professors was as follows:

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>
	\$	\$
Loans receivable	<u>10,173</u>	<u>16,254</u>

**9. Financial Instruments**

The College is exposed to various risks through its financial instruments. The following analysis presents the College's exposure to significant risk at the reporting date December 31, 2016.

Credit risk

The College is exposed to credit risk with respect to term deposits, trade and other receivables and government remittances receivable. The College assesses, on a continuous basis, trade and other receivables on the basis of amounts it is virtually certain to receive. The credit risk with respect to term deposits is insignificant since they are held in large financial institutions.

Interest rate risk

The College is exposed to interest rate risk on its fixed interest rate financial instruments. Fixed rate instruments subject the College to risk of changes in fair value. The College is exposed to this type of risk as a result of its investments. However, the risk associated with investments is reduced to a minimum since these assets are invested in guaranteed income certificates.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE of the Canadian Reformed Churches**  
**(Operating as Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2016**

**10. Bursary Funds**

	<b>Foreign Students</b>	<b>Other Bursaries</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>
			<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Balance, beginning of year	226,869	93,364	320,233	330,250
Contributions	50	900	950	850
Investment income	2,727	2,642	5,369	3,291
	<u>229,646</u>	<u>96,906</u>	<u>326,552</u>	<u>334,391</u>
Bursaries paid out	(9,230)	(900)	(10,130)	(14,045)
Operating expenditures	-	(92)	(92)	(113)
Balance, end of year	<u><b>220,416</b></u>	<u><b>95,914</b></u>	<u><b>316,330</b></u>	<u><b>320,233</b></u>
<b>As follows:</b>				
Cash	8,828	2,995	11,823	33,946
Term Deposits	80,810	75,490	156,300	116,043
Investments	128,092	15,286	143,378	150,025
HST Receivable	12	-	12	-
Interest receivable	2,674	2,143	4,817	20,219
	<u><b>220,416</b></u>	<u><b>95,914</b></u>	<u><b>316,330</b></u>	<u><b>320,233</b></u>

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**  
(OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
DECEMBER 31, 2017

**INDEX**

	Page
Independent Auditor's Report	
Balance Sheet	1
Statement of Fund Balances	2
Statement of Revenues and Expenses	3
Schedule of General Expenses	4
Statement of Cash Flows	5
Notes to the Financial Statements	6 - 10

## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Governors of  
Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, which comprise the balance sheet as at December 31, 2017, and the statement of revenues and expenses, statement of fund balances and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

### *Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements*

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### *Auditor's Responsibility*

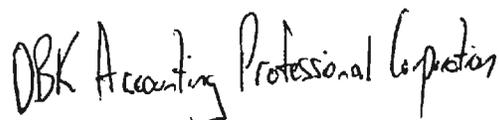
Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the College's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained in our audit is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

### *Opinion*

In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches as at December 31, 2017, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.



**DBK Accounting Professional Corporation**  
Authorized to practice public accounting by the Chartered  
Professional Accountants of Ontario

Hamilton, Ontario  
June 12, 2018

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES  
(OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)**

**BALANCE SHEET  
AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2017**

	General Fund	Bursary Fund	Publication Foundation	Library Fund	Total 2017	Total 2016
<b>ASSETS</b>						
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>						
Cash	\$ 169,046	\$ 31,440	\$ 11,276	\$ 6,786	\$ 218,548	\$ 152,928
Accounts receivable	12,195	4,179	-	-	16,374	33,921
Marketable securities (Note 3)	201,304	269,623	-	-	470,927	531,609
Government sales tax recoverable	8,415	-	-	-	8,415	6,111
Prepaid expenses and sundry assets	898	-	-	-	898	877
	<u>391,858</u>	<u>305,242</u>	<u>11,276</u>	<u>6,786</u>	<u>715,162</u>	<u>725,446</u>
<b>CAPITAL ASSETS (Note 4)</b>	<u>1,397,391</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>108,196</u>	<u>1,505,587</u>	<u>1,513,984</u>
	<u><u>\$ 1,789,249</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 305,242</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 11,276</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 114,982</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 2,220,749</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 2,239,430</u></u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>						
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>						
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 18,099	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 18,099	\$ 13,820
Government remittances payable	20,525	-	-	-	20,525	20,074
Deferred revenue	29,080	-	-	-	29,080	21,454
	<u>67,704</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>67,704</u>	<u>55,348</u>
<b>DEFERRED CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	<u>32</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>1,098</u>
	<u><u>67,736</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>67,736</u></u>	<u><u>56,446</u></u>
<b>FUND BALANCES</b>						
BALANCE (Note 5)	324,154	305,242	11,276	6,786	647,458	751,060
INVESTED IN CAPITAL ASSETS	1,397,359	-	-	108,196	1,505,555	1,431,924
	<u>1,721,513</u>	<u>305,242</u>	<u>11,276</u>	<u>114,982</u>	<u>2,153,013</u>	<u>2,182,984</u>
	<u><u>\$ 1,789,249</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 305,242</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 11,276</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 114,982</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 2,220,749</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 2,239,430</u></u>

Approved on behalf of the board

Governor, \_\_\_\_\_

Governor, \_\_\_\_\_

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES  
(OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)**

**STATEMENT OF FUND BALANCES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017**

	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Bursary Fund</u>	<u>Publication Fund</u>	<u>Library Fund</u>	<u>Total 2017</u>	<u>Total 2016</u>
BALANCE, BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 1,722,220	\$ 316,330	\$ 23,113	\$ 121,321	\$ 2,182,984	\$ 2,237,484
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses	9,293	(11,088)	(11,837)	(16,339)	(29,971)	(54,500)
Fund transfers (Note 6)	<u>(10,000)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
BALANCE, ENDING OF YEAR	<u><u>\$ 1,721,513</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 305,242</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 11,276</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 114,982</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 2,153,013</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 2,182,984</u></u>

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES  
(OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)**

**STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017**

	General Budget 2017	General Fund 2017	Bursary Fund 2017	Publication Foundation 2017	Library Fund 2017	Total 2017	Total 2016
<b>REVENUES</b>							
Allotments from churches	\$ 1,003,950	\$ 1,004,345	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,004,345	\$ 939,694
Gifts - sister churches	213,290	214,348	-	-	-	214,348	207,860
Superannuation pension	152,000	149,096	-	-	-	149,096	150,447
Student fees	35,550	40,770	-	-	-	40,770	42,070
Women's Savings Action	35,000	-	-	-	35,000	35,000	35,000
Gifts and collections	30,000	24,200	1,225	2,189	-	27,614	28,252
Sundry and investment income	5,000	3,360	4,048	1,020	412	8,840	15,428
	<u>1,474,790</u>	<u>1,436,119</u>	<u>5,273</u>	<u>3,209</u>	<u>35,412</u>	<u>1,480,013</u>	<u>1,418,751</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>							
Faculty (page 4)	1,077,090	1,036,799	-	-	5,624	1,042,423	1,036,148
Administration & library (page 4)	274,700	269,407	161	25	522	270,115	257,636
Property (page 4)	77,000	74,614	-	-	-	74,614	65,141
Amortization	-	46,006	-	-	24,066	70,072	69,916
Subscriptions	25,000	-	-	-	21,539	21,539	24,232
Publication costs	16,000	-	-	15,021	-	15,021	3,699
Sabbatical costs	5,000	-	-	-	-	-	6,349
Bursaries paid out	-	-	16,200	-	-	16,200	10,130
	<u>1,474,790</u>	<u>1,426,826</u>	<u>16,361</u>	<u>15,046</u>	<u>51,751</u>	<u>1,509,984</u>	<u>1,473,251</u>
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 9,293</u>	<u>\$ (11,088)</u>	<u>\$ (11,837)</u>	<u>\$ (16,339)</u>	<u>\$ (29,971)</u>	<u>\$ (54,500)</u>

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES  
(OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)**

**SCHEDULE OF GENERAL EXPENSES  
DECEMBER 31, 2017**

	Budget 2017	Total 2017	Total 2016
<b>Faculty</b>			
Salaries - professors	\$ 531,713	\$ 531,713	\$ 521,905
Pension - professors	275,900	273,647	270,166
Employee benefits	185,000	159,001	172,734
Superannuation	60,977	57,072	55,410
Professional development	15,500	9,196	5,291
Extra teaching staff	8,000	6,170	7,381
	<u>\$ 1,077,090</u>	<u>\$ 1,036,799</u>	<u>\$ 1,032,887</u>
<b>Property</b>			
Caretaking, maintenance and security	\$ 43,000	\$ 42,796	\$ 39,849
Utilities	18,500	17,513	18,715
Insurance	9,500	10,065	3,033
Building improvements	6,000	4,240	3,544
	<u>\$ 77,000</u>	<u>\$ 74,614</u>	<u>\$ 65,141</u>
<b>Administration and library</b>			
Salary and benefits	\$ 208,700	\$ 199,689	\$ 195,832
Public relations	15,000	20,648	10,549
Travel and meetings	15,000	12,145	12,349
Office supplies and general	10,000	10,317	14,313
Professional services	10,500	8,860	9,958
Accreditation	4,000	8,135	7,875
Software and support	4,000	4,320	1,842
Bank charges and interest	2,000	1,260	1,599
Telephone	2,000	1,755	1,965
Website	2,500	1,241	460
Office equipment maintenance and rental	1,000	1,037	894
	<u>\$ 274,700</u>	<u>\$ 269,407</u>	<u>\$ 257,636</u>

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES  
(OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)**

**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017**

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
<b>OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Deficiency of revenues over expenses	\$ (29,971)	\$ (54,500)
Adjustments for		
Amortization of capital assets	70,072	69,916
Deferred income recognition	<u>(1,066)</u>	<u>(1,066)</u>
	<u>39,035</u>	<u>14,350</u>
Change in non-cash working capital items		
Accounts receivable	17,547	10,842
Marketable securities	60,682	27,100
Government sales tax recoverable	(2,304)	841
Prepaid expenses and sundry assets	(21)	50,583
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	4,279	(3,634)
Government remittances payable	451	478
Deferred revenue	<u>7,626</u>	<u>1,209</u>
	<u>127,295</u>	<u>101,769</u>
<b>INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Purchase of capital assets	(47,151)	(12,288)
Purchase of reference collection	<u>(14,524)</u>	<u>(15,589)</u>
	<u>65,620</u>	<u>73,892</u>
Increase in cash	65,620	73,892
Cash, beginning of year	<u>152,928</u>	<u>79,036</u>
Cash, end of year	<u>\$ 218,548</u>	<u>\$ 152,928</u>

# THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES (OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017

### 1. PURPOSE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, (the "College"), which operates by authority of the Theological College of Canadian Reformed Churches Act, 1981, provides training for the ministry. As a registered charity, the College is exempt from income tax and may issue receipts for charitable donations.

### 2. SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These financial statements are prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations. The significant policies are detailed as follows:

#### (a) FUND ACCOUNTING

Revenues and expenses for the College's general operations are reported in the General Fund.

The Bursary Fund reports externally restricted contributions used for specific purposes related to providing bursaries, grants and gifts to eligible candidates. It includes the Faber-Holwerda Bursary, Selles Bursary, and Foreign Student Bursary.

The Publication Fund, an externally restricted fund, reports revenues and expenses related to publishing theological works.

The Library Fund, an internally restricted fund, reports revenues and expenses related to library disbursements (including the Book Centre).

#### (b) REVENUE RECOGNITION

The College follows the restricted fund method of accounting for contributions. Restricted contributions relating to specifically set up Funds are recognized as revenue in the year they are received. Other restricted funds are recognized in the General fund when the related expenses are incurred.

Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the General Fund when they are received.

Allotments from churches are recognized as revenue in the year they are assessed.

Student fees related to academic terms occurring after year end are recorded as deferred revenue.

Student fees and interest income are recognized when earned.

The College is named as a beneficiary in certain wills. Revenue on these arrangements, whether interest or capital, is recognized on receipt.

#### (c) CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

Cash and cash equivalents include cash and short-term investments with maturities of three months or less from their date of acquisition, which are readily convertible into a known amount of cash, and are subject to an insignificant risk to changes in their fair value.

#### (d) INVESTMENTS

The College has elected to classify all of its investments as held-for-trading, and accordingly they are recorded at fair value. Changes in fair values during the year are included in revenue or expenses on the statement of revenues and expenses.

Quoted market prices were used to determine the fair value of the investments as at the year end date.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES  
(OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017**

**2. SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES, continued**

**(e) CAPITAL ASSETS**

Capital assets are recorded at cost. The College provides for amortization using the straight-line method at rates designed to amortize the cost of the capital assets over their estimated useful lives. The annual amortization rates are as follows:

Building	Straight-line	2.5%
Parking lot	Straight-line	10%
Equipment and furniture	Straight-line	10%
Reference collection	Straight-line	10%
Computer equipment	Straight-line	33.3%

The College maintains a collection of reference books. These books are recognized at cost. Included in the collection are a number of books that the College considers to be rare and precious and do not depreciate in value. The costs to obtain these books are not amortized and are recorded at \$ 2,547 (2016 - \$ 2,547).

**(f) EMPLOYEE FUTURE BENEFITS**

Faculty are covered by a defined benefit multi-employer pension plan for which contributions are recognized as a salary expense in the statement of revenues and expenses. Participation in this plan is mandatory and is based on an established assessment criteria. Benefits and contributions are determined and administered by the Foundation for Superannuation of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Since the College does not control the plan, it is not possible to estimate the potential contributions that could be required to fund the College's proportionate share of the plan's unfunded vested benefit. Thus, the College is unable to account for this plan as a defined benefit plan and uses defined contribution plan accounting instead.

The College also makes regular contributions to a group registered retirement savings plan ("RRSP") administered by a third party, on behalf of each eligible employee. Group RRSP contributions are charged to operations in the year made.

**(g) FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS**

The College's financial instruments consist of cash, marketable securities, accounts receivable, government sales tax recoverable, accounts payable and accrued liabilities and government remittances payable.

The College initially measures its financial assets and financial liabilities at fair value adjusted by, in the case of a financial instrument that will not be measured subsequently at fair value, the amount of transaction costs directly attributable to the instrument.

The College subsequently measures all its financial assets and financial liabilities at amortized cost. Financial assets measured at amortized cost are cash, marketable securities, accounts receivable and government sales tax recoverable. Financial liabilities measured at amortized cost include accounts payable and accrued liabilities and government remittances payable.

At the end of reporting period, the College assesses whether there are any indications that a financial asset may be impaired. When there is an indication of impairment, the carrying amount of the asset is reduced and the amount of the reduction is recognized as an impairment loss in the statement of revenues and expenses.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES  
(OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017**

**2. SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES, continued**

**(h) CONTRIBUTED SERVICES**

Directors and committee members volunteer their time to assist in the College's activities. While these services benefit the College considerably, a reasonable estimate of their amount and fair value cannot be made and, accordingly, these contributed services are not recognized in the financial statements.

**(i) USE OF ESTIMATES**

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. By their nature, these estimates are subject to measurement uncertainty. The effect of changes in such estimates on the financial statements in future periods could be significant. Accounts specifically affected by estimates in these financial statements are amortization of capital assets and accounts payable and accrued liabilities.

**3. MARKETABLE SECURITIES**

	General Fund 2017	Bursary Fund 2017	Total 2017	Total 2016
Guaranteed Investment Certificates, 1.2% - 2.55%, maturing August 2018 - October 2019, measured at amortized cost	\$ 146,789	\$ 269,623	\$ 470,927	\$ 531,609
MFC Income Fund, mutual fund, measured at fair market value	54,515	-	-	-
	<u>\$ 201,304</u>	<u>\$ 269,623</u>	<u>\$ 470,927</u>	<u>\$ 531,609</u>

**4. CAPITAL ASSETS**

	2017 Cost	2017 Accumulated amortization	2017 Cost	2017 Accumulated amortization	2017 Cost	2017 Accumulated amortization	2016 Total
	General	General	Library Fund	Library Fund	Total	Total	
Land	305,110	-	-	-	305,110	-	305,110
Building	1,172,954	142,409	-	-	1,172,954	142,409	1,021,977
Parking lot	44,263	16,037	-	-	44,263	16,037	32,652
Equipment and furniture	87,929	60,423	-	-	87,929	60,423	31,206
Reference collection	-	-	771,926	666,277	771,926	666,277	117,738
Rare and precious books	-	-	2,547	-	2,547	-	-
Computer equipment	24,371	18,367	-	-	24,371	18,367	5,301
	<u>1,634,627</u>	<u>237,236</u>	<u>774,473</u>	<u>666,277</u>	<u>2,409,100</u>	<u>903,513</u>	<u>1,513,984</u>
	<u>\$ 1,397,391</u>		<u>\$ 108,196</u>		<u>\$ 1,505,587</u>		

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES  
(OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017**

**5. BURSARY FUND BALANCES**

Included in the Bursary Fund balance are three separate funds. The breakdown of these funds is as follows:

	2017	2016
Selles Bursary	\$ 3,212	\$ 2,480
Faber Holwerda	94,045	93,433
Foreign Student Bursary Fund	207,985	220,417
	\$ 305,242	\$ 316,330

**6. INTERFUND TRANSFERS**

During the year, the Board of Governors approved an interfund transfer of \$10,000 from the General Fund to the Library Fund.

**7. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS**

The College is operated by a Federation of Churches, and solicits revenues and procures goods and services from members of these Churches at market rates.

The College has provided loans to current and retired professors to assist with the purchase of housing or special circumstances.

At year end the amount of loans receivable (accounts receivable) owing from the current and retired professors was as follows:

	2017	2016
Loans receivable	\$ 3,292	\$ 10,173

**8. COMPARATIVE FIGURES**

The financial statements have been reclassified, where applicable, to conform to the presentation used in the current year. The changes do not affect prior year revenues and expenses.

**THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES  
(OPERATING AS CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017**

**9. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS**

(a) CREDIT RISK

The College is exposed to credit risk with respect to marketable securities, accounts receivable and government remittances receivable. The College assesses, on a continuous basis, trade and other receivables on the basis of amounts it is virtually certain to receive. The credit risk with respect to term deposits is insignificant since they are held in large financial institutions.

(b) LIQUIDITY RISK

Liquidity risk arises through having excess financial obligations over available financial assets at any point in time. The College's objective in managing liquidity risk is to maintain sufficient readily available reserves in order to meet its liquidity requirements at any point in time. The College achieves this by maintaining sufficient cash and cash equivalents.

(c) INTEREST RATE RISK

The College is exposed to interest rate risk on its fixed interest rate financial instruments. Fixed rate instruments subject the College to risk of changes in fair value. The College is exposed to this type of risk as a result of its investments. However, the risk associated with investments is reduced to a minimum since these assets are invested in guaranteed income certificates and mutual funds.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Relevant Sections of the CRTS Handbook**

CH 4.5– The Principal

CH 5.1 – Qualifications and Appointment of Faculty

CH 5.1.3 – Form for the Ordination (or Installation) of Ministers of the Word

CH 5.3.1 - Salary

CH 5.6 – Faculty Evaluation and Development

CH 5.6.1 – Tenure Policy

CH 5.10 – Support for Teaching and Administrative Skills

## The Principal

The Principal supervises the affairs of the College [ACT, Art. 8] and is appointed by the Board of Governors [ACT, Art. 5.11(g)] at the advice of Synod. [Bylaw 12:10.01(b)]

- 1. The role of the Principal is to:** [By-Law 12:11.6]
  - 1.1 execute general supervision of the College, the faculty, adjunct professors or lecturers, the administration and the students.
  - 1.2 act as Chancellor of the College and as Chancellor confer all degrees and diplomas.
  - 1.3 serve as an *ex officio* advisory member of all Senate and Board committees, except the Executive Committee.
  - 1.4 act in the Senate as Chairman of the Senate, and as the Academic Dean;
  - 1.5 report to the Board annually with regard to his function and the work of the Senate.
  
- 2. The term of the Principal**
  - 2.1 Appointment to the Principalship will be for a three year period.
  - 2.2 The Board will conduct regular reviews and an extensive review in the third year of the Principal's work.
  - 2.3 A Faculty member appointed as Principal may be reappointed for up to two additional three year terms (9 years). Only under exceptional circumstances would a person serve beyond 9 years.
  - 2.4 The Board will provide appropriate teaching relief and appropriate administrative support to allow the Principal to function properly in his role as Principal.

Approved by the Board of Governors: September 5, 2002

Revised: September 4, 2003, September 6, 2012

Revised: January 15, 2014

## Qualifications and Appointment of Faculty

The following provisions in the Act and By-Laws apply:

Act 5.11(d) provides that the Board of Governors has the power to “appoint, in accordance with the policies established by Synod, members of the faculty who are in full accord with the basis of the College as set out in section 4”.

By-Law 12:7.01(a) requires that the Academic Committee “make recommendations concerning all matters pertaining to the Principal, faculty, Registrar, library and librarian”.

By-Law 12:10.01 states that “All appointments to the faculty shall be subject to the approval of Synod”.

### 1. Qualifications

#### 1.1 Form of Subscription

The members of the faculty must be members in good standing of one of the Canadian Reformed Churches or of one of the churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain ecclesiastical fellowship. Before their appointment is effective, they shall sign the Form of Subscription as contained in CH - 5.2.

Ordinarily, the signing of the form shall take place during the first public Convocation following the new faculty member’s appointment.

#### 1.2 Other qualifications to be considered include:

- the candidate’s character;
- knowledge of the subjects to be taught;
- experience in the pastoral ministry;
- academic preparation;
- teaching ability.

#### 1.3 Degree requirement

The Board favours faculty who have earned an appropriate academic degree, whenever possible. The Board will encourage faculty to obtain the post-graduate degrees required to continue teaching at the Seminary. The Th.M. degree is the minimum standard for professor, with the Th.D/Ph.D being the preferred degree.

### 2. Appointment Procedure

2.1 The procedure regarding the role of the Senate, the Academic Committee and the Board of Governors is described in detail in CH 5.1.1.

### 3. Role of General Synod

3.1 General Synod meets in closed restricted session to discuss the recommendation. If approved, the decision is communicated by the chairman of the Board of Governors to the professor designate, and made public. The Board of Governors formally appoints the new faculty member. The professor designate is given approximately ten days to return his decision.

## CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

3.2 Depending on the timing of the appointment process in relation to the date of the next General Synod, the Board may deem it preferable either to make an interim part-time appointment or arrange for a visiting lecturer, or to petition the churches for a special assembly of Synod to deal with the professorial appointment. [Act 6(2)]

### **4. Rank of Appointee**

4.1 All full-time members of the teaching faculty have the rank of professor.

### **5. Tenure**

5.1 The Seminary has a Tenure Policy. Please refer to CH - 5.6.

Approved by the Board of Governors: September 9, 2004  
Revised on: September 10, 2009

## CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

### FORM FOR THE ORDINATION (OR INSTALLATION) OF MINISTERS OF THE WORD<sup>1</sup>

The consistory has now twice published the name of our brother to learn if anyone had objections against his installation to the ministry of the Word (or: ordination as minister in this church). Since no one has brought forward anything lawful against his doctrine and life, we will now in the name of the Lord proceed to his installation (or: ordination). We recognize that our brother has been set aside by the federation as a professor of theology and will not serve this congregation as a full-time minister. In this service then he will be installed as a minister of the Word, also so that he can serve in that capacity among us, and at the convocation of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary he will be installed as a professor of theology.

Let us first hear what Holy Scripture teaches about the office of ministers of the Word.

#### Institution by Christ

The exalted Christ gathers his church through his Word and Spirit, and in his grace uses the ministry of man. The apostle Paul indicates this when he says, And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12). As the Chief Shepherd, who unceasingly cares for his flock, he appoints shepherds to take heed to the flock in his name. They are to take care of the sheep of Christ by means of the proclamation of the Word, by the administration of the sacraments, and by prayers and pastoral supervision. In this way the flock is tended and led in the right paths.

In the early Christian church this task was fulfilled by the apostles. They, in turn, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, appointed elders in every church. According to I Timothy 5:17 there were elders who ruled the congregation. Some of them were also called to labour in preaching and teaching. The latter are now called ministers of the Word. They have received the ministry of reconciliation, of which Paul speaks, saying, All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18-20).

*1 To be suggested to a church that has called a minister from outside the Canadian Reformed federation to serve as professor for CRTS. This Form recognizes that the Installation of the brother as professor will happen at the CRTS Convocation, and thus concentrates on installing such a brother as minister of the Word, and thus is not to confused with the Form found in CH 5.1.2 called "Installation Form for Professors." As a minister called to be professor from within the Canadian Reformed Churches remains a minister of the churches he last served, in his case installation through the above form is not necessary; they will only be installed as professors at the CRTS Convocation.*

### CH - 5.1.3

## CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

### Duties of the Minister

The task of the minister of the Word can be described as follows:

First, he must declare the whole counsel of God, proclaiming the Word according to the command of the apostle Paul: I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching (2 Tim 4: 1,2). After the example of the apostle he is to perform this duty in public. He shall expose all errors and heresies as unfruitful works of darkness, and exhort the membership to walk as children of the light. He shall teach the Word of God to the youth of the church and to others whom God calls, for the Holy Scriptures are able to instruct them for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Thus comforting and admonishing, he shall call the people of God to the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Second, he is called to administer the sacraments, because Christ has joined this administration to the preaching of the gospel. It is therefore the duty of the ministers of the Word to administer holy baptism according to the command of Christ, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). He also is to administer the holy supper as instituted by Christ when he said, Do this in remembrance of me (1 Cor 11:24).

Third, it is his duty to call upon the name of the Lord in public worship with supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings (1 Tim 2.1,2).

Fourth, it is the duty of the ministers of the Word, with the elders as stewards of the house of God, to see to it that in the churches all things are done in peace and good order. As the apostle Peter said: shepherd the flock of God, . . . not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock (1 Pet 5:2, 3). From all this we see what glorious work the ministers of the Word may perform. When the Chief Shepherd is manifested they as faithful servants will obtain the unfading crown of glory.

### Ordination (or: Installation)

Beloved brother, you are now about to enter upon your office. We ask you to answer the following questions before God and his holy church.

First, do you feel in your heart that God himself, through his congregation, has called you to this holy ministry?

Second, do you believe the Old and the New Testament to be the only Word of God and the complete doctrine of salvation? Do you reject all doctrines conflicting with it?

Third, do you promise faithfully to discharge the duties of your office and to adorn the doctrine of God with a godly life? Do you also promise to submit to the discipline of the church in case you should become delinquent in doctrine or life?

What is your answer? Answer: I do.

Laying On of Hands\*

**CH - 5.1.3**

Installation as Minister Form - 2 -

## CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

God, our heavenly Father, who has called you to this holy office, enlighten you with his Spirit and so govern you in your ministry that you may fulfil it obediently and that it may bear fruit to the honour of his name and the expansion of the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Charge to the Minister

Beloved brother in Christ, God our Father has obtained the church for himself with the blood of his own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has made you pastor and teacher. Love Christ, feed his lambs and tend his sheep, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly (1 Pet 5:2). Keep watch over yourself; set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (1 Tim 4:12).

Preach the pure doctrine, so that by your preaching and teaching God's people may be kept in obedience to the Word of God. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Tim 2:3). Do not neglect the gift you have (1 Tim 4:14), with which the Lord has endowed you for this ministry. Devote yourself to your duties with all your strength and with perseverance, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Tim 4:16).

### Charge to the Congregation

Beloved brothers and sisters, the Lord has granted us this servant. Receive him with all joy. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news (Is 52:7). Take heed to receive the Word of God, which you shall hear from him, and accept his words, spoken according to the Holy Scriptures, not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13).

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning for that would be of no advantage to you (Heb 13:17).

If we thus receive this servant from the Lord the peace of God will come upon us, and we will inherit eternal life through Christ.

Since we of ourselves are not capable of all this, we will call upon the almighty God.

### Prayer

Merciful Father, it pleases you to gather to yourself out of the whole human race a church chosen to life eternal. We thank you that you gather the church by the ministry of men and that you give this minister of the Word to service within this federation of churches. We pray that by your Spirit you will equip him for the task to which you have called him. Enlighten his mind that he may understand the Scriptures, and open his mouth that he may proclaim the mysteries of the gospel with boldness. Grant him wisdom and faithfulness to teach students in a manner that pleases you, that by his good leadership your churches may be preserved and increased.

Encourage and comfort him by your Spirit, so that he may remain steadfast in troubles and temptations, and, finally, with all your faithful servants, may enter into the joy of his Lord.

**CH - 5.1.3**

Installation as Minister Form - 3 -

CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Grant that those entrusted to his care may acknowledge this servant as sent by you. Give that they may receive the instruction and admonition of Christ which this shepherd shall bring to them and that they may joyfully submit to his direction. Grant that through his labours all may believe in Christ and thus inherit eternal life.

Hear us, O Father, through Jesus Christ your Son, who with you and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

*\*The laying on of hands shall not take place in the case of those who are already in the ministry.*

Adopted by the Board of Governors on September 7, 2017

## Salary

### 1. Synod directs

Subject to the direction of Synod, the Board of Governors shall fix the salaries payable to all professors and the stipends payable to all lecturers annually. [By-law 12:13.03]

The most recent Synod to address this subject was Synod Burlington, 1986. Article 154, C5 (a) to (d) reads as follows:

It is fair that the Board of Governors, via its Finance and Property Committee, looks for ways and means to compensate [for a perceived financial disadvantage vis-a-vis ministers] the professors at the College by:

- a. fixing the salaries of the professors in such a manner that they are the equivalent of an average salary of a minister in the Hamilton/Burlington area with its living conditions, to which should be added an amount of cash equal to the cash consideration for the following compensations and benefits enjoyed by such a minister:
  1. 50% of the average car allowance;
  2. The equivalent of benefits for dwelling and utilities
- b. adjusting (grossing up) the addition of these benefits (1. and 2. above) assuming a marginal tax rate of 35% for the taxation increase resulting from those amounts becoming taxable income;
- c. adjusting the salaries annually, as a rule on January 1<sup>st</sup> by applying the Canadian Consumer Priced (sic) Index Change for the last twelve-month period ending October 31<sup>st</sup>;
- d. establishing the average benefits and average minister's salaries (sic) in the Hamilton/Burlington area. The Finance and Property Committee shall, from time to time, but at least once per two years, survey the stipend and benefits paid to ministers in the Hamilton/Burlington area.

### 2. The Board administers via the Finance and Property Committee

Annually, towards the end of the year, the salary of the professors will be reviewed by the Committee—and increased as appropriate—using the following methodology:

- a. determine the average salary of a minister in the Hamilton/Burlington area., either from published church budgets or by contacting the respective church treasurers, by adding those salaries and dividing the sum by the number of ministers included in the survey;
- b. with the assistance of a Chartered Accountant determine the amount of income tax due on the resulting average salary, based on a husband/spouse combination;
- c. Deducting (b) from (a) produces the average disposable income of a minister;
- d. next, with the Chartered Accountant, the income tax payable on a professor's salary is determined, again based on a husband/spouse combination;

## CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

- e. amounts representing the housing allowance (as determined by the Finance and Property Committee), the average dwelling insurance, property tax, 50% of the average car allowance equivalency, and utilities (all determined from church budgets), as well as the total income tax payable, are deducted from the professor's salary. This produces the disposable income of a professor;
- f. should the figure in (e) be found lower than the figure in (c), then the professor's salary is adjusted, effective the first day of the new year, to equalize the two figures.

(please refer to next page for sample calculation using 2003 figures)

### **3. Other matters relating to salaries or remuneration**

By-law Number 12 also contains clauses with respect to the following aspects of remuneration:

- a. The Board of Governors may direct the payment of additional remuneration to a professor in respect of any special office held by him. 12:13.04(b)
- b. In addition there may be paid for the benefit of a professor such other benefits as the Board of Governors may determine. 12:13.04(c)
- c. A lecturer shall receive an annual stipend. 12:13.05
- d. Continuation of Salary in case of early retirement or in case of death. 12:13.06(a-c)
- e. Professor's Pension. 12:13.03(a-b)
- f. Widow's Pension. 12:13.08
- g. Dependant's Allowance. 12:13.09
- h. Amounts of Professor's and Widow's Pensions. 12:13.10(a-c)
- i. Discretionary Payments to a professor (before or after retirement), to his widow, to the benefit of any of his dependants, or to a person who is partially dependant upon a professor for support. 12:13.11
- j. Periodic Payments or Deductions. 12:13.12
- k. Suspension of Lecturer's Stipend. 12:13.13

Approved by Board of Governors: September 9, 2004

CANADIAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Finance and Property Committee  
Salary Administration - Professors

Calculation 2003

Ministers' average salary (from church budgets)		38,750
Income tax payable - at 14.49%		<u>5,615</u>
 Average disposable income - minister (A)		 33,135
 Professor's salary		 76,142
Income tax payable - at 24.70%		<u>18,807</u>
 Disp. income - prof. before allowances (B)		 57,335
 Deduct		
housing allowance	15,000	
dwelling insurance	550	
property tax	3,794	
utilities	3,660	
car allowance	<u>3,500</u>	<u>26,504</u>
 Net Disposable Income - professor (C)		 30,831
 Adjustment necessary to equalize disposable incomes:		
 Minister (A)		 33,135
Professor (C)		<u>30,831</u>
 Difference between (A) and (C)		 2,304
 Conclusion:		
 The professor's salary needs to be increased by \$2,304 to		 \$ 78,446

## Faculty Evaluation and Development

### 1. Background

CRTS is committed to continued faculty evaluation and development. Several documents within the CRTS Handbook illustrate this, such as CH 5.5 (Conference Attendance and Funding), CH 5.7 (Sabbatical Leave), and CH 5.10 (Support for Teaching and Administrative Skills).

In order to ensure that progress and development continues throughout a professor's years of service at CRTS, a periodic review of each faculty member will be conducted. With respect to new professors, such reviews are meant to assist them in the challenges of teaching, research, and development with the goal of receiving tenure (see CH 5.6.1). With respect to tenured professors, such reviews are not meant to nullify or jeopardize tenure but rather to create a regular opportunity to assess, discuss, and encourage the professors in their teaching, research, and development.

### 2. Procedure

- a. After the first and third years of teaching, a review process will be undertaken by the Academic Dean in which the teaching, research, and development of the professor will be assessed.
- b. Approaching the sixth year of teaching, the review process described in the tenure policy (CH 5.6.1) will be conducted.
- c. Every six years after a professor has been granted tenure, a review process will be undertaken by the Academic Dean in which the teaching, research, and development of the professor will be assessed.
- d. In the reviews mentioned in a) and c) above, the process will include:
  - i. Self-evaluation
  - ii. Course evaluation reports
  - iii. Visits to the classroom
  - iv. Any research and writings of the professor in the period being discussed
  - v. Opportunity for colleagues to comment on the work of the professor.
- e. The Academic Dean will initiate and conduct these reviews at the appropriate time. In the case of the reviews of the Academic Dean's role as professor, the Vice-principal will initiate and conduct the review.
- f. A brief written report regarding each of these reviews will be presented to the Academic Committee.

### 3. Criteria

- a. The following criteria will be considered in this review
  - i. Faithfulness to Scripture and adherence to the Three Forms of Unity
  - ii. Level of expertise displayed in lectures and in writings
  - iii. Degree to which the professor is appreciated by his colleagues and his students
  - iv. Preparation, organization, and delivery of courses and lecture material
  - v. Ability to respond to students in and out of class
  - vi. Ability and willingness to make use of technology
  - vii. Willingness to make improvement in any necessary area.

Approved by the Board of Governors: September 10, 2015

## Tenure Policy

### 1. Definition

- 1.1 The granting of tenure means that a professor's teaching responsibilities at the Seminary continue indefinitely.
- 1.2 In accepting tenure, a professor indicates a commitment to continue to meet the academic standards and to strive for excellence in his discipline. Should this not be the case, the Board of Governors would need to decide whether the status of tenure should be revoked and the professor in question dismissed.

### 2. Criteria

The following criteria are important in the granting of tenure:

- 2.1 The educational background and formal academic upgrading (if desirable and necessary) of the professor. He should be equipped, and continue to equip himself, to furnish scholarly lectures.
- 2.2 The lectures must not only be faithful to the Scriptures and be confessionally sound, but must also be scholarly.
- 2.3 The professor must be able to communicate his discipline in a satisfactory manner.
- 2.4 The professor must enjoy the respect of his colleagues and of the students.
- 2.5 The professor must exhibit the ability to respond to student feedback and colleague input for improving his courses or method of teaching.
- 2.6 The professor must give evidence of his scholarship through publications, public lectures and participation in activities, especially within the Canadian Reformed community.

### 3. Procedure

- 3.1 By January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year in which a Synod will be held, the faculty member involved will submit to the Academic Dean an up-to-date activity list (or curriculum vitae) as well as written self-evaluation, in which he also notes, for example, his contributions to the Seminary.
- 3.2 Keeping in mind the target date of six years from the initial appointment, the Academic Committee of the Board of Governors will carefully monitor classroom reports as submitted by the academic governors, as well as input from the Academic Dean (who will pass on appropriate evaluations from colleagues and also have access to student evaluations). The faculty member involved will be kept fully informed.
- 3.3 Before the Synod that is to deal with the granting of the tenure, the Academic Committee will propose the granting of tenure to the Board of Governors for adoption by the full Board.
- 3.4 This proposal will go to the next Synod for implementation, that is that Synod direct the Board of Governors to grant tenure to the professor involved.

Adopted by Synod Abbotsford 1995, Art. 97

### 8.2.8 Committee for Pastoral Training Program (PTP)

# Report by the Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church at Guelph to Synod Edmonton 2019 regarding the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee

General Synod Dunnville (2016) decided:

*4.2 To reappoint Guelph-Emmanuel as the Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CTPTF) with the following mandate:*

*4.2.1 To look after all internship-related funding matters;*

*4.2.2 To assess the churches each year based on the anticipated funding required for a particular summer;*

*4.2.3 To report about its activities to the next general synod, which report shall be sent to all the churches at least six months prior to the next general synod.* Article 64 page 46 of the Acts of General Synod Dunnville 2016

The Committee, at the commencement of its task in the fall of 2007 formulated a document titled “The Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding” describing its mandate, membership, duties of its members, the manner of appointment of Committee members and auditors of the financial records, and the requirement to prepare triennially a report to be sent to the Church at Guelph for submission to the Churches before the next General Synod” (See Appendix 1), and composed a document called “Guidelines developed by the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee” (See Appendix 2).

**In 2016**, the Committee assessed and received an amount of \$1 per communicant member from the churches. In the summer of 2016, no students were enrolled in the Pastoral Training Program (PTP).

The total financial support for students in the program in 2016 was \$0. A report regarding amounts received and disbursed during the years 2016-2018 is attached (See Appendix 3). Please note that the amounts sent to the employing churches not only varied with allowances for travel but also with the number of weeks employed (See Appendix 2).

Mr. Calvin Lodder and Mr. Tony Vantol, appointed by the Church of Guelph to audit the financial records of the PTP Funding Committee, reported by letter dated October 19, 2016 to the Church of Guelph that the financial records of the PTP Funding Committee were in good order.

**In 2017**, the Committee assessed and received an amount of \$2 per communicant member from the churches. During the same year, two students were enrolled in the Pastoral Training Program and employed by, mentored by and paid as shown below:

<b>Student</b>	<b>Hosting Church</b>	<b>Mentor</b>	<b>Payment to Church</b>
Cody Swaving	Winnipeg-Redeemer, MB	Rev. Joe Poppe	\$10,197.60 (includes \$500 for travel costs)
Darren Feenstra	Aldergrove, BC	Rev. R.A. Schouten	\$9,816.00 (includes \$1,000 for travel costs)

The total financial support for students in the program in 2017 was \$20,013.60 (Appendix 3).

Mr. Calvin Lodder and Mr. Tony Vantol, reappointed by the Church of Guelph to audit the financial records of the PTP Funding Committee, reported by letter dated October 11, 2017 to the Church of Guelph that the financial records of the PTP Funding Committee were in good order.

**During 2018**, the Committee assessed and received an amount of \$2.50 per communicant member from the churches. During the summer of that year, four students were enrolled in the Pastoral Training Program and employed by, mentored by and paid as shown below:

<b>Student</b>	<b>Hosting Church</b>	<b>Mentor</b>	<b>Payment to Church</b>
Chauncey Knegt	Carman West, MB	Dr. Andrew Pol	\$10,197.60 (includes \$500 for travel costs)
Eric Onderwater	Langley, BC	Rev. Doug Vandeburgt	\$10,697.60 (includes \$1,000 for travel costs)
Jeremy Segstro	Fergus-North, ON	Rev. Jagt	\$8,816.00
Mark Tenhaaf	Edmonton-Providence, AB	Rev. Richard Aasman	\$10,447.60 (includes \$750 for travel costs)

The total financial support for students in the program in 2018 was \$40,158.80. A report regarding amounts received and disbursed during 2016 - 2018 is attached (See Appendix 3).

Mr. Calvin Lodder and Mr. Matt Kottelenberg, appointed by the Church of Guelph to audit the financial records of the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee, reported by letter dated October 9, 2018 to the Church of Guelph that the financial records of the PTP Funding Committee were in good order.

## APPENDIX 1

### **The Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding**

The Church at Guelph has been charged by Synod Smithers 2007 to appoint a Committee for Pastoral Training Program (PTP) Funding (Art. 159.2 of the Acts).

The **Mandate** of the Committee has been described in the Acts as follows (Art. 78.4.11.1):

- a. To look after all internship-related funding matters
- b. To determine a reasonable compensation for internship, and to develop guidelines for such compensation
- c. To assess the churches each year based on the anticipated funding required for a particular summer
- d. To report about their activities to the next general synod, which report shall be sent to all the churches.

#### **Membership:**

The **membership** of the Committee consists of a Chairman, a Vice-chairman, a Treasurer, a Secretary, a Liaison with Council, and a Liaison between the Theological Seminary and the Committee, the PTP Coordinator (Art 78, 4.11.2).

#### **Duties of Members:**

The **Chairman** is responsible for directing the activities of the Committee in fulfilling its mandate. He will call a meeting on no less than two occasions per annum, preferably in May and October. These meetings will enable the Committee to discuss funding by Churches to employ students and assessment of Churches to include in budgets, respectively.

The **Vice-Chairman** acts as Chairman in his absence and assists the Committee with carrying out its mandate. The Vice-Chairman and the Treasurer will jointly open a bank account and sign cheques.

The **Treasurer** is responsible for managing the receipts and disbursements of funds. He is to submit an annual statement of receipts and expenditures to the Committee before its meeting in October of each year and to make recommendations regarding the annual assessment to be submitted by the Churches. He is to keep accurate records of receipts and disbursements and have these available for auditing before the Committee meeting in October of each year.

The **Secretary** is to keep minutes of meetings, to submit minutes and letters for review and approval, and to mail letters to request the submission of the annual assessment to the Churches after the October meeting to enable inclusion of the assessment in the budget of each of the churches.

The **Liaison with Council** is to keep Consistory with the deacons informed of the activities of the Committee, to relay requests by the Committee for appointments and other matters, and to inform the Committee of decisions of Consistory with the deacons regarding the PTP Funding Committee.

The **Liaison between the Committee and the Theological Seminary** is the Pastoral Training Program Coordinator. He will inform the Committee of all matters regarding funding of the Pastoral Training Program and may request assistance in the carrying out of his duties as PTP Coordinator. He will inform the Committee of the number of students to be enrolled in the PTP on or before the Committee meeting in October of each year. He will, after having made arrangements for placements of students by Churches and with mentors, inform the Committee of the same in a timely manner.

#### **Appointments:**

The Committee members, except the PTP Coordinator, are appointed by the Consistory with the deacons of the Church at Guelph. The PTP coordinator is ex officio the liaison between the Theological Seminary and the Committee. The division of tasks of the Committee members is as agreed upon by the Committee. The appointment of all members, except the PTP Coordinator, is for a three year period and Consistory with the deacons may, at its pleasure, reappoint members for additional three-year terms.

#### **Auditors:**

The Church at Guelph will appoint two auditors, members of neighbouring churches, who will examine the books of the Treasurer each year before the October meeting of the Committee.

**Report to General Synod:**

The Committee will submit triennially a report to the Church at Guelph detailing the activities of the Committee well in advance of General Synod so as to enable Consistory with the deacons to review and submit the report six months before General Synod.

## Guidelines developed by the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee

### 1. Compensation for students in the Pastoral Training Program

- a. The mandate of the Committee is “To determine a reasonable compensation for internship, and to develop guidelines for such compensation” (Acts of General Synod Smithers 2007, Art. 78:4.11.1.2). The Committee considered that the Pastoral Training Program (PTP) is an **educational** program that endeavours to equip students more fully for their future task among God’s people. The Committee obtained information from past participants in the Program, both students and churches where students were placed during their internship, from students who hope to be enrolled in the PTP, and examined co-op programs in graduate studies at Canadian universities. The Committee considered that the PTP is not unlike co-op programs at Canadian universities that aim to provide practical training and expertise to students. The students that enrol in the PTP are in a Master of Divinity Program of Studies. The Pastoral Training Program is mandatory for all students aspiring to the ministry of the Word among the Canadian Reformed Churches in accordance with the document entitled “Guidelines for the pastoral Proficiency Program” (Art. 78:4.10). The Federal Government established rates of pay to students in a Master’s program during 2014 and 2015 to range from \$17.92 to \$22.54 per hour when employed in a co-op program at Federal departments, laboratories and agencies. The highest amount was only to be paid to students who are re-employed or to students who have relevant previous work experience. The website is: [www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs\\_pol/hrpubs/compensation/tces1\\_e.asp](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/compensation/tces1_e.asp). New rates of pay are published every two years. After considering these matters, the Committee decided to pay \$20.60 per hour or \$772.50 per week for students employed during the summer of 2016 and \$22.04 per hour or \$881.60 per week for students employed during the summer of 2017 and 2018. Since the requirements of the PTP program are considered to be fulfilled during a minimum of 10 weeks but preferably 12 weeks of training, the Committee decided to pay the employer, the Church where the student is placed by mutual agreement between the PTP Coordinator and the mentor, a total amount of \$10,579.20 for 12 weeks of training. (If the student worked 10 weeks the amount would be \$8,816.00 and if he worked 11 weeks the amount would be \$9,697.60). The Committee will pay each of the Churches employing a student the above stated amount in a manner ensuring that the student can be paid on time.
- b. To encourage participation of the Churches in Western Canada in the Pastoral Training Program, the Committee decided to provide an additional amount of funding to students travelling outside of Ontario; \$500.00 for travel to Manitoba; \$750.00 for travel to Alberta, and \$1000.00 for travel to British Columbia. This amount would also be sent to the local hosting church.
- c. The Committee decided not to pay for additional travel costs, mileage, the student being married and having a family to look after, housing expenses, tuition fees or other considerations. The Committee considered that it has as mandate to fund an educational employment program. The Committee is not a Committee for Needy Students. Also, employers that hire students enrolled in a cooperative program of studies at Canadian universities pay students for the period of the training program, but not for travel expenses, family needs, housing expenses or other expenses. However, a local hosting church could, at its discretion, add to the approved amount based on the individual student’s circumstances.
- d. The Committee decided to fund only the 10-12 week Pastoral Training Program period. Students should be able to complete the requirements of the mandatory 10 to 12-week Pastoral Training Program during that period of time. The Church employing the student may, at its discretion, enter

into an agreement with the student to employ him for a period longer than 12 weeks but would then itself face payment of the additional costs.

## **2. Assessment**

- a. The Committee will consider at its October meeting the number of students to be employed by the Churches in the ensuing year and send a letter to the Churches regarding the annual assessment for the PTP requesting the churches to pay the assessment before March 31 of the following year.

## **3. Foreign Students**

- a. The student should apply early for a work permit, i.e. before January of the year in which he will be enrolled in the Pastoral Training Program.
- b. The granting of a work permit may be expedited when the student writes in his application to Citizenship and Immigration Canada that he is enrolled in a Master of Divinity Program of Studies at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Ontario, that the Theological Seminary is a Province of Ontario recognized degree-granting institution, that the program is mandatory to complete the requirements for entrance into the ministry, and that he is required to complete the Pastoral Training Program immediately following the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of studies of the 4-year M.Div. program.
- c. The Committee will provide advice to foreign students requesting help in applying to Citizenship and Immigration Canada for a social insurance number and a work permit.

## **4. Employment and taxes**

- a. The Committee will advise churches regarding employment of students and payroll deductions for taxes, unemployment insurance, etc.

## APPENDIX 3

**Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee  
Statement of Receipts & Disbursements**

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
<b>Receipts</b>			
Annual assessments	10,992.00	22,320.00	27,385.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<u>10,992.00</u>	<u>22,320.00</u>	<u>27,385.00</u>
<b>Disbursements</b>			
Student Support	0.00	20,013.60	40,158.80
Bank Service Charges	<u>198.21</u>	<u>48.08</u>	<u>31.40</u>
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<u>198.21</u>	<u>20,061.68</u>	<u>40,190.20</u>
<b>Surplus / - deficit</b>	<u>10,793.79</u>	<u>2,258.32</u>	<u>(12,805.20)</u>

<b>Student Support Detail:</b>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Winnipeg Redeemer - Cody Swaving		10,197.60	
Aldergrove - Darren Feenstra		9,816.00	
Carman West - Chauncey Knegt			10,197.60
Langley - Eric Onderwater			10,697.60
Edmonton Providence - Mark Tenhaaf			10,447.60
Fergus North - Jeremy Segstro			8,816.00
	<u>-</u>	<u>20,013.60</u>	<u>40,158.80</u>

**Statement of Financial Position as at December 31**

<b>ASSETS</b>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Cash & GIC's	<u>31,540.07</u>	<u>34,908.70</u>	<u>18,073.50</u>
Accounts Receivable	<u>(271.50)</u> **	<u>(1,381.81)</u>	<u>2,648.19</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u>31,268.57</u>	<u>33,526.89</u>	<u>20,721.69</u> ***

- \* 2016 - no students in the PTP program
- \*\* Negative amounts represent overpayments by churches which are carried forward and applied to subsequent years' assessments.
- \*\*\* Balance is maintained for future student enrolment to avoid large fluctuations in the annual assessment.

8.2.9 Report re: Days of Prayer – Churches at Burlington-Waterdown & Edmonton-Providence

Canadian Reformed Church Edmonton-Providence  
Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church Burlington-Waterdown

September 27, 2018  
General Synod Edmonton 2019  
c/o Synod Organizing Committee  
Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton  
21112 35 Ave NW  
Edmonton, AB T6M 2P6  
[clerk@synod.edmontonimmanuel.ca](mailto:clerk@synod.edmontonimmanuel.ca)

Dear Brothers:

Synod Dunnville 2016 appointed the Churches at Burlington-Waterdown and Edmonton-Providence as the two churches to proclaim a Day of Prayer in accordance with article 54 of our Church Order. Since that appointment we have received no requests for a Day of Prayer.

Brothers, we wish you God's blessings in all your deliberations.

Respectfully submitted,



Andrew Kieft, clerk of Burlington-Waterdown



Jesse Meints, clerk of Edmonton-Providence

## 8.2.10 Committee for Bible Translation (CBT)

# **Report of the Committee for Bible Translation, Synod Edmonton 2019**

## **The Committee**

The Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) consists of two members:

1. Rev Dave de Boer, Abbotsford BC
2. Rev Rodney Vermeulen, Glanbrook, ON

Rev Dave de Boer has completed nine years on the committee and is scheduled to retire from the Committee. The CBT recommends that Synod release Rev de Boer from the CBT and appoint a replacement.

## **The Mandate**

Synod 2016 mandated the CBT to:

1. Solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV;
2. To submit worthy translation changes to the ESV editorial committee;
3. To prepare and distribute a report to the churches in advance of the next Synod.

## **Material from the Churches**

The CBT did not receive any material or inquiries from the churches. The CBT did not pass along any suggested translation changes to the ESV editorial committee. The ESV translation committee published a decision not to make changes to the text, which would have made suggestions unwelcome. This decision was later rescinded (see below).

## **The English Standard Version (ESV)**

### **The ESV since Synod 2016**

Since Synod Dunnville 2016 issued its mandate to the Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) a couple of note-worthy things happened in the ESV world. The first noteworthy item was the announcement from Crossway, the publishers and copyright holders of the ESV, that the ESV2016 would be the ESV Permanent Text. This statement was soon retracted in response to numerous protests. The second noteworthy item was a number of changes to the ESV text adopted for the 2016 edition. The change that caused the most discussion was the translation of Genesis 3:16.

### **ESV Permanent Text**

In August 2016 Crossway published a statement indicating that the current 2016 text of the ESV was to become permanent. Their statement said:

*Beginning in the summer of 2016, the text of the ESV Bible will remain unchanged in all future editions printed and published by Crossway—in much the same way that the King James Version (KJV) has remained unchanged ever since the final KJV text was established almost 250 years*

ago (in 1769). This decision was made unanimously by the Crossway Board of Directors and the ESV Translation Oversight Committee. All future Crossway editions of the ESV, therefore, will contain the Permanent Text of the ESV Bible—unchanged throughout the life of the copyright, in perpetuity.

*The creation of the ESV Permanent Text represents the culmination of more than seventeen years of comprehensive work by the Translation Oversight Committee, as authorized and initiated by the Crossway Board in 1998. (For additional information about the ESV Bible translation, read more about the translation philosophy). The decision now to create the Permanent Text of the ESV was made with equally great care—so that people who love the ESV Bible can have full confidence in the ESV, knowing that it will continue to be published as is, without being changed, for the rest of their lives, and for generations to come.<sup>1</sup>*

As might have been expected Crossway received much feedback about their decision. Further reflection brought them to release the following statement on September 28<sup>th</sup> 2016:

*In August 2016, we posted on our website that “the text of the ESV Bible will remain unchanged in all future editions printed and published by Crossway.” The goal behind this decision to make the text permanent was to stabilize the English Standard Version, serving its readership by establishing the ESV as a translation that could be used “for generations to come.” We desired for there to be a stable and standard text that would serve the reading, memorizing, preaching, and liturgical needs of Christians worldwide from one generation to another.*

*We have become convinced that this decision was a mistake. We apologize for this and for any concern this has caused for readers of the ESV, and we want to explain what we now believe to be the way forward. Our desire, above all, is to do what is right before the Lord.*

*Our goal at Crossway remains as strong as ever to serve future generations with a stable ESV text. But the means to that goal, we now see, is not to establish a permanent text but rather to allow for ongoing periodic updating of the text to reflect the realities of biblical scholarship such as textual discoveries or changes in English over time. These kinds of updates will be minimal and infrequent, but fidelity to Scripture requires that we remain open in principle to such changes, as the Crossway Board of Directors and the ESV Translation Oversight Committee see fit in years ahead.*

*Crossway is responsible for shepherding and preserving the ESV Bible text, as a calling and commission from the Lord; to be undertaken in full consciousness of the fearful responsibility that this entails; which can be accomplished only in complete dependence on the Lord’s grace, mercy, strength, providence, and wisdom; for the glory of God alone.*

The Preface to the ESV Bible reads:

*We know that no Bible translation is perfect; but we also know that God uses imperfect and inadequate things to his honor and praise. So to our triune God and to his people we offer what*

---

<sup>1</sup> This statement is no longer available at [www.crossway.org](http://www.crossway.org) but was retrieved from <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2016/09/12/the-new-stealth-translation-esv/>

*we have done, with our prayers that it may prove useful, with gratitude for much help given, and with ongoing wonder that our God should ever have entrusted to us so momentous a task. To God alone be the glory!*

*We believe deeply that the translation and publication of the Bible is a sacred trust and unspeakable privilege, and we want to do all we can to steward this calling, before God, with the reverence and care that it deserves.<sup>2</sup>*

The CBT welcomed this reversal of the August decision precisely for the two reasons stated in the September statement. A translation committee has to “allow for ongoing periodic updating of the text to reflect the realities of biblical scholarship such as textual discoveries.”<sup>3</sup> Translation committees must also allow for “changes in English over time.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Changes to the 2016 edition of the ESV**

The ESV2016 incorporated a number of changes to the ESV2011. 52 words in 29 verses were changed. These word changes were in addition to a number of other less significant changes such as versification, a few corrections, the addition of quotation marks and the like. Appendix 1 contains a copy of the publisher’s official list of word changes to the ESV2016.

By far the most significant change, which is also the change that created the most discussion, was to Genesis 3:16. The ESV2011 reads “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” The ESV 2016 however renders the verse as “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” Every reader of scripture can accept that this change is quite significant. The change has even raised the accusation that the ESV translation committee has foregone their philosophy of an “essentially literal”<sup>5</sup> translation in order to render an interpretation of the verse to support the complementarian view of biblical manhood and womanhood. The opinion of the CBT is that the more literal translation of the ESV2011 is to be preferred so that each pastor and scriptural exegete can wrestle with the meaning of the Hebrew.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.crossway.org/articles/crossway-statement-on-the-esv-bible-text/>

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.esv.org/translation/philosophy/>

## The Christian Standard Bible<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Ted VanRaalte of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary published an article in the Clarion Magazine in May 2016 about the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)<sup>7</sup>. He expressed his desire to put this translation on the radar and indicated his own personal benefit from this translation. The Holman Christian Standard Bible was a conservative translation that is faithful to the original texts in the line of other translations like the NASB, the NKJV and the ESV. The HCSB was first published in 2004 and then revised in 2009. A major revision of the HCSB happened in 2017, when the translation was renamed to be the Christian Standard Bible (CSB). The CBT was not mandated to investigate this translation. The CBT has not made a thorough investigation of this translation but is including some information about the CSB in this report.

The Christian Standard Bible is published by Broadman and Holman Publishers, a division of Lifeway Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. The roots of this translation go back to concerns in the Southern Baptism Convention in the 1990's that the NIV translation committee was preparing a major revision that would make use of gender-inclusive language. The NIV revision was published in 2011 with the gender-inclusive language as anticipated. The CSB follows a traditional approach to the use of pronouns in Bible translations. The male pronouns are used for generic references and words like 'man' and 'mankind' are used for the whole human race.

The initial editorial group for the HCSB favored the Majority Text as the basis for the translation. This changed after the death of the key editor. The editorial group was reconfigured, and the new editors based their translation on the BHS for the OT and the *Novum Testamentae Graecae* text for the NT. This means that the HCBS shares the same textual foundation as the ESV and NIV, which are or were in common use in the Canadian Reformed Churches. The HCSB included a large number of manuscript notes with its translation.

The translation philosophy of the CSB translation committee is described as 'optimal equivalence.' The translators put forward this method as a compromise between formal and dynamic or functional equivalence. 'Optimal equivalence' means that the translators used a literal translation when this would be readily understood by modern readers but otherwise opted for a functional translation to convey the meaning of the original text. The original Introduction to the HCBS stated that,

“In practice, translations are seldom if ever purely formal or dynamic but favor one theory of Bible translation or the other to varying degrees. Optimal equivalence as a translation philosophy recognizes that form cannot be neatly separated from meaning and should not be changed (for example, nouns to verbs or third person "they" to second person "you") unless comprehension demands it. The primary goal of translation is to convey the sense of the original with as much clarity as the original text and the translation language permit. Optimal equivalence appreciates the goals of formal equivalence but also recognizes its limitations.”

---

<sup>6</sup> Blum, E., ed., *Holy Bible: The Holman Christian Standard Bible*, Holman Bible Publishers: Nashville, 2004, revised 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Van Raalte, Th., "Introducing the Holman Christian Standard Bible" Clarion Magazine, Volume 65, May 6, pp. 243-245, Premier Publishing, Winnipeg, 2016.

The CSB is the property of the Southern Baptist Convention, but the translation is not noticeably affected by Baptist theology. One reviewer suggested that the translation of the verb tenses in Matthew 18:18<sup>8</sup> reflected a Baptist view of the institutional church. This same reviewer concluded that the translation has for the most part avoided a Baptist bias.

The readability and literary quality of the translation is evaluated differently by various readers. One reviewer praised the readability of the translation and preferred the HCSB over the ESV.<sup>9</sup> Another reviewer questioned the literary style of the translation and rated it lower than the ESV, NKJV and RSV.<sup>10</sup> The recent revision to the CSB has removed some of the distinctive features of the original HCSB. The CSB no longer capitalizes the pronouns used for God. The CSB no longer translates the Greek ‘doulos’ as slave but has reverted to the traditional translation of ‘servant’.

The CBT has not done a study or evaluation of the CSB and is not recommending for or against the use of this translation in the churches. The CBT is providing information about the CSB because the CSB is not known or used in our churches but appears to be comparable to the other translations that are currently being used.

**Conclusion**

The CBT recommends that Synod maintain the CBT committee as a resource for the churches for Bible translation matters. The CBT recommends continuing the same mandate as is listed above.

**Appendix 1 – Changes in the ESV2016<sup>11</sup>**

<u>2016 Text Update Verses</u>	<u>Previous Text Verses</u>
Genesis 3:16	
Your desire shall be <b>contrary to</b> your husband, <b>but</b> he shall rule over you.	Your desire shall be <b>for</b> your husband, <b>and</b> he shall rule over you.
Genesis 4:7	
Its desire is <b>contrary to</b> you, but you must rule over it.	Its desire is <b>for</b> you, but you must rule over it.
Exodus 38:11	
And for the north side there were hangings of a hundred cubits; their twenty pillars <b>and</b> their twenty bases were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver.	And for the north side there were hangings of a hundred cubits, their twenty pillars, their twenty bases were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver.
Numbers 14:42	
Do not go up, for the <b>LORD</b> is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies.	Do not go up, for the <b>Lord</b> is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies.
Judges 6:13	
And Gideon said to him, "Please, <b>my lord</b> , if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?"	And Gideon said to him, "Please, <b>sir</b> , if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?"

<sup>8</sup> Marlowe, M., "The Holman Christian Standard Bible," <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csb.html>, 2011  
<sup>9</sup> Van Raalte, Th., "Introducing the Holman Christian Standard Bible" *Clarion Magazine, Volume 65, May 6*, pp. 243-245, Premier Publishing, Winnipeg, 2016.  
<sup>10</sup> Marlowe, M., "The Holman Christian Standard Bible," <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csb.html>, 2011  
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.esv.org/about/2016-updates/>

2 Samuel 23:34	
Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai of Maacah, Eliam the son of Ahithophel <b>the Gilonite</b> ,	Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai of Maacah, Eliam the son of Ahithophel <b>of Gilo</b> ,
1 Kings 8:48	
if they repent with all their <b>heart</b> and with all their <b>soul</b> in the land of their enemies,	if they repent with all their <b>mind</b> and with all their <b>heart</b> in the land of their enemies,
2 Kings 20:18	
And some of your own sons, who <b>will come from you, whom you will father</b> , shall be taken away,	And some of your own sons, who <b>shall be born to you</b> , shall be taken away,
2 Chronicles 6:38	
if they repent with all their <b>heart</b> and with all their <b>soul</b> in the land of their captivity to which they were carried captive,	if they repent with all their <b>mind</b> and with all their <b>heart</b> in the land of their captivity to which they were carried captive,
2 Chronicles 13:9	
Whoever comes for ordination with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are <b>not</b> gods.	Whoever comes for ordination with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are <b>no</b> gods.
Esther 9:32	
The command of Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.	The command of <b>Queen</b> Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.
Psalm 18:48	
who <b>rescued</b> me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you <b>delivered</b> me from the man of violence.	who <b>delivered</b> me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you <b>rescued</b> me from the man of violence.
Proverbs 13:16	
<b>Every</b> prudent <b>man</b> acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly.	<b>In everything</b> the prudent acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly.
Isaiah 2:3	
For out of Zion shall go <b>forth</b> the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.	For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
Isaiah 10:5	
<b>Woe to</b> Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury!	<b>Ah</b> , Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury!
Ezekiel 40:14	
He measured also the vestibule, <b>sixty</b> cubits. And around the vestibule of the gateway was the court.	He measured also the vestibule, <b>twenty</b> cubits. And around the vestibule of the gateway was the court.
Hosea 13:14	
<b>I shall</b> ransom them from the power of Sheol; <b>I shall</b> redeem them from Death.	<b>Shall I</b> ransom them from the power of Sheol? <b>Shall I</b> redeem them from Death?
Micah 4:3	
He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide <b>disputes</b> for strong nations far away;	He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away;
Matthew 4:24	
So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, <b>those having seizures</b> , and paralytics, and he healed them.	So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, <b>epileptics</b> , and paralytics, and he healed them.

Matthew 17:15	
"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he <b>has seizures</b> and he suffers terribly.	"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he <b>is an epileptic</b> and he suffers terribly.
Luke 7:36	
One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table.	One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at <b>the</b> table.
Luke 22:44	
And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.	And being in <b>an</b> agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.
Luke 24:47	
and that repentance <b>for the</b> forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.	and that repentance <b>and</b> forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
Luke 24:50	
<b>And</b> he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them.	<b>Then</b> he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them.
John 5:22	
<b>For</b> the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,	The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,
Ephesians 1:5	
he predestined us for adoption <b>to himself</b> as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.	he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.
Ephesians 3:1	
For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner <b>of</b> Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—	For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner <b>for</b> Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—
Colossians 1:11	
<b>being</b> strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,	<b>May you be</b> strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,
James 2:10	
For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become <b>guilty of</b> all of it.	For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become <b>accountable for</b> all of it.

## 8.2.11 Committee for the official Website

---

# REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD 2019

Committee for the Official Website (CWEB)

October 23, 2018

Esteemed brothers in the Lord,

With fraternal greetings in the name of our Saviour, we hereby submit our report to General Synod Edmonton (Immanuel) 2019, as mandated by General Synod Dunnville 2016.

## COMMITTEE MANDATE

Synod Dunnville 2016 gave the CWEB the following mandate:

- 4.3.1. To maintain the existing website and associated technical functions;
- 4.3.2. To revise the content of the website whenever necessary;
- 4.3.3. To continue the project of digitalizing Reports brought to past synods and to ensure that all reports for GS 2019 are available on the website before the next general synod;
- 4.3.4. To investigate the effectiveness of the website and to implement changes as considered necessary and desirable, focusing on the following matters: design and layout of the website, greater usability for smart phones and similar devices, menu structures, searching capabilities and greater use of graphics. The CWEB should also investigate whether or not it is possible to get permission for publishing links to the Psalms and Hymns of the Book of Praise on the website;
- 4.3.5. To use paid, professional services, if necessary, to complete 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 in a timely fashion;
- 4.3.6. To serve GS 2019 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months before the beginning of Synod, including a financial statement and a proposed budget.

## COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

### 1. COMMITTEE MEETINGS, COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

- 1.1. Since 2015, CWEB's primary form of communication has been a free online chat and collaboration system called Slack. This has allowed the committee members to keep one another informed of their activities, share relevant information, and discuss issues as they arise. Since GS 2016, the committee also had seven online meetings using Skype for voice and video communication to discuss and provide updates of projects and progress.
- 1.2. Br. Jeremy Koopmans, br. Jonathan Reinink, and br. Darryl Shpak have looked after the more technical side of the website and e-mail functions, while Rev. Roukema has helped maintain the website content, served as the main point of contact for emails received by the committee, and also served as convener for Skype meetings.

## 2. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE REGULAR ACTIVITIES OF THE CWEB

- 2.1. A significant part of our mandate involves the regular maintenance of the existing website and associated technical functions, as well as the revision of the content of the website whenever necessary (Acts of GS 2016, Article 68, 4.3.1, 4.3.2). This includes posting news items from the churches (calls, worship service changes, special events), documents such as press releases, reports and announcements from various assemblies (classes, regional synods, synods, synodical deputies and committees). Content is also updated when out-of-date information is noticed (particularly by comparing the site's information to the Yearbook for the CanRC), and upon request by churches or individuals.
- 2.2. The CWEB can report that the canrc.org website does receive significant traffic. Over the last three years the canrc.org website was visited 547,462 by 119,841 unique visitors and had 927,137 pageviews. 83% of the visits were from Canada, 6% from the United States and 5% from Australia. 66% accessed the website from a desktop, 21% from a mobile device, and 13% from a tablet. A Google Analytics report on the usage of the canrc.org website can be found in **Appendix D**.
- 2.3. Although the GS 2016 did not mandate the CWEB with providing or maintaining the canrc.org email service, it is the CWEB's understanding that this was an oversight of GS 2016, and we have continued to provide and maintain this service. This oversight of GS 2016 was in all likelihood and in no small way caused by the CWEB's failure to request GS 2016 to include this in their mandate. As part of this understood mandate, the CWEB continues to provide email services to the churches. The ministers are provided with permanent canrc.org e-mail addresses, a mailing list for discussions, and technical support for these services. The main benefit of the canrc.org service is that it provides ministers with a professional email address (i.e., `firstname.lastname@canrc.org`) that doesn't change every time they move congregations. Some of the churches also use the canrc.org domain for their clerk's e-mail. The canrc.org email is hosted by Dreamhost, which is very effective in terms of cost, but not in terms of usability, functionality, or quality. Below, in §5, you will find a more detailed assessment of the service and a recommended way forward.
- 2.4. The CWEB occasionally receives comments from website visitors. Many of the e-mails the committee receives are clearly spam and are treated as such. We do, however, receive sporadic inquiries from serious parties and these are responded to in a timely and appropriate fashion, usually by the convener. We also occasionally receive messages that are intended for individual ministers or committees (i.e. foreign churches - CRCA) and we forward these to the appropriate individuals. The committee also thanks all those who have pointed out errors, omissions and corrections to the website content.
- 2.5. We continue to provide website hosting and domain name services for individual churches who wish to take advantage of it, something we have done historically but which was removed from the committee's mandate in 2016. Currently, only two congregations, Guelph (Emmanuel) and Guelph (Living Word) still have their sites hosted on our servers. (The report will interact further with this aspect of our activities and future mandate in §6 – Webhosting for Individual Churches)
- 2.6. As part of our mandate (Art. 68, 4.3.3), the CWEB continued the work of digitizing all past Synodical reports in searchable format. Br. Jonathan Chase (now Rev. Chase) completed this project, collecting and digitizing the past Synodical reports. These have been included on the new federation website. It should be noted that many of these documents were in Dutch, some were quite faded, and a number also included hand-written notes. As such, the quality of some the older documents inhibited the effectiveness of the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) processing and their resultant quality for indexing and searching functionality.
- 2.7. GS 2016 gave the CWEB a budget of \$10,000, of which \$5,800 was designated to implementing changes to the federation website, and \$3250 to the project of digitizing past Synodical reports. As is noted under §3 – The New Federation Website (canrc.org) – the scope GS 2016's mandate in 4.3.4 far exceeded the amount budgeted and the church for the administration of the General Fund (Carmen East) granted an increase of

\$3000 (see §3.1 for a more detailed explanation). With regard to other costs, the only ongoing expenses CWEB incurs have to do with the hosting plan at Dreamhost.com. For the details, we refer Synod to the financial report attached as Appendix A.

- 2.8. The rest of the mandate given to the CWEB by GS 2016 involved implementing significant improvements to the federation website (canrc.org) (Art. 68, 4.3.4, 4.3.5), and publishing links to the Book of Praise on the website (Art. 68, 4.3.4). Since these matters require a more extensive treatment, they are listed under their own headings below.

### **3. THE NEW FEDERATION WEBSITE (CANRC.ORG)**

The most significant project undertaken by CWEB since the previous synod was the revamp of the website. GS 2016 mandated the CWEB with the following: *“To investigate the effectiveness of the website and to implement changes as considered necessary and desirable, focusing on the following matters: design and layout of the website, greater usability for smart phones and similar devices, menu structures, searching capabilities and greater use of graphics.”* (Acts of Synod 2016, Article 68, §4.3.4) GS 2016 also mandated the CWEB *“[to] use paid, professional services, if necessary, to complete 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 in a timely fashion.”* (Acts of Synod 2016, Article 68, §4.3.5)

- 3.1. After analyzing the needs of a modern website, including content administration, support for mobile devices, and support for high-quality searching, the committee concluded that that best approach would be to undertake a rebuild of the website. The previous website at canrc.org was launched in the spring of 2010, and had not been significantly modified since then, beyond normal content maintenance. The programming code for the existing federation website was written with the design needs of a website in 2010 in mind, and the code did not have a clean line of separation between the Content Management System (CMS) and the visual interface. Taking these two factors together, this meant that attempting to update and revise the existing website code to produce something approaching what GS 2016 had mandated would be a difficult and time-consuming process with uncertain results. It was determined that rebuilding the website from the ground up would be the quickest and most effective way to produce the results mandated by GS 2016 and would produce a website which would be more amenable to updates and refinements in the future.
- 3.2. The committee also determined that the scope of the project was beyond what the committee members could achieve as a group of volunteers and that the cost of using professional services to fully complete this part of our mandate would be somewhere in the area of \$16,000 to \$18,000 – significantly more than the \$5800 designated by GS 2016 for this work. The successful completion of our mandate would rely heavily on volunteered time and professional services.
- 3.3. With these factors in mind, the committee determined that the most reasonable and practical approach would be to have a member of the CWEB do the work, and Jonathan Reinink (Web Developer, owner Church Social), was contracted to take on the project. Jonathan in turn contracted the professional design services of Jason Bouwman and Compass Creative to assist in the completion of the work.
- 3.4. It should be noted that even with the additional \$3000 released from the General Fund, that Jonathan Reinink, as well as Jason Bouwman (Compass Creative), generously provided their services and time well below what is considered market-rates. It is estimated that approximately 50% of the work for this project was volunteered.
- 3.5. The old website was hosted on a platform called Dreamhost which provided functionality in additional areas, including site hosting for individual church websites, email addresses for ministers and others within the federation, and the ministerial email list. The hosting package we were using was set up in 2006 and was considered a “budget” package then. Its functionality was found to be inadequate for the redesigned site,

and the decision was made to switch to new service providers, Heroku and Algolia. This will affect other aspects of CWEB's mandate, namely website hosting (see §6) and the budget (see **Appendix A – Budget**)

- 3.6. **The new website launched on October 20, 2018 at canrc.org.** Features include:
  - 3.6.1. A visual overhaul giving the site a modern, professional design
  - 3.6.2. Responsive layout that works well on mobile devices
  - 3.6.3. High resolution, retina display ready artwork
  - 3.6.4. Extremely fast, high-quality site-wide searching, including full-text search of PDF document, all powered by Algolia
  - 3.6.5. Optimized for fast browsing speeds (less than 500ms per page load)
  - 3.6.6. Built in a search engine optimized manner
  - 3.6.7. Complete content review and update
  - 3.6.8. Improved site structure and navigation
  - 3.6.9. Human-friendly links (e.g. canrc.org/churches/lincoln instead of canrc.org/?church=45)
  - 3.6.10. Built using industry trusted software, frameworks and libraries (PHP 7.2, Laravel 5.7, Tailwind CSS, Postgres)
  - 3.6.11. Hosted on a top-tier hosting provider (Heroku), with a secure connection (HTTPS) by default
- 3.7. Selected screenshots comparing the “old” and “new” versions of the website are included in **Appendix C**.

#### **4. THE PUBLISHING OF THE BOOK OF PRAISE ON THE FEDERATION WEBSITE**

GS 2016 also mandated the CWEB with the following: *“The CWeb should also investigate whether or not it is possible to get permission for publishing links to the Psalms and Hymns of the Book of Praise on the website.”* (Acts of Synod 2016, Article 68, §4.3.4)

- 4.1. As it relates to this part of our mandate, we have been in communication with the Standing Committee for the Book of Praise (SCBP) regarding hosting this content. SCBP has informed CWEB that the text of the Psalms and Hymns is under copyright by various copyright holders, and that the formatting and layout of the musical notation of the Psalms and Hymns is under copyright by Premier Printing. After some communication, in late 2016, SCBP advised CWEB to include the prose sections only on the website and indicated that they would work further with the copyright holders to try to resolve this issue.
- 4.2. As a result, the new federation website includes the text of the prose sections of the Book of Praise, as provided to CWEB by Premier Printing at the advice of SCBP. The Psalms and Hymns, which were available in their old versions prior to the revision of the Book of Praise, have been removed. We hope that in the future, SCBP will be able to provide us with the remaining content.

#### **5. MINISTER EMAIL**

As committee, we have historically offered email services to the churches of the federation (c.f. Acts of Synod 2013, Article 92, §4.3.4). Synod Dunnville 2016 did not include this in our latest mandate, but the Acts of Synod did not make it clear whether this removal was deliberate or not. As noted above, this is likely due to the fact that the CWEB report to GS 2016 did not include this in their recommended mandate. With this understanding we continue to provide e-mail services to the churches. However, there are significant challenges and issues with the minister email service.

- 5.1. It would be a gross over-generalization to say that the ministers have been dissatisfied with the canrc.org email service, but – as gross over-generalizations go – it is fairly accurate. The CWEB has received a significant amount of informal feedback indicating that many ministers find the email service frustrating and

even unworkable due to configuration issues and poor spam filtering. Over the years, the committee has noticed a decline in the usage of the canrc.org email accounts by ministers in favour of other email options (free services like Gmail, ISP offered services, etc.). Currently, very few ministers actually use the canrc.org email for regular daily use and, more often than not, they are using a personal email (Gmail/Hotmail) as their ministerial email.

- 5.2. The reason for this poor user experience is directly related to the service the churches use for the canrc.org email accounts. Our current email hosting is provided by Dreamhost, the same service which provided hosting for the former federation website. The email service provided by Dreamhost is fairly old and simple, and it is barebones, providing relatively little capability beyond basic email functions. Configuring (or reconfiguring) your email client is difficult and requires a number of settings to be correct to ensure that you are able to both send and receive emails from a canrc.org email address, and the process needs to be repeated in different forms on every device a minister wishes to use. The spam filtering provided is subpar in comparison with other email services. The webmail client is difficult to use, and while improvements have been made, it is still far behind what free services like Gmail provide.
- 5.3. As a result of these observations and considerations, one of the CWEB's activities over the last three years has been to investigate these usability issues and look at possible solutions for improved email service for the ministers and other users. There are a number of possible solutions open to the churches:
  - 5.3.1. Maintain the status quo and continue providing the existing Dreamhost email service, at a cost of approximately \$300.00 CAD per year, accepting that it is barebones email service and will not serve the needs of most ministers, and that it will likely be a seldom used email service. The CWEB has some concerns with this approach as it will mean the CWEB is providing a service that is largely unused, unappreciated and widely panned by users.
  - 5.3.2. Discontinue or phase out email hosting altogether and encourage ministers to use their own personal emails or local church emails. While this is the approach to which most ministers are defaulting, the CWEB suggests that the canrc.org minister email offers a level of professionalism that a free service like Gmail or Outlook does not, and also offers a portability that a church specific email (ie. @burlingtonbenzer.ca or @stalbertcanrc.com) does not.
  - 5.3.3. Continue hosting the canrc.org emails but move to a paid service (such as Office 365 or Gmail) that is more reliable and robust, understanding that the cost of providing the canrc.org email service will increase substantially.
- 5.4. The CWEB recommends that, if GS 2019 determines that the canrc.org email is beneficial and of importance to the churches and worth continuing, the CWEB be mandated to pursue and, as soon as is feasibly possible, purchase, an email service for the canrc.org emails that will reliably provide quality email service and usability.
- 5.5. The CWEB has performed an initial, although fairly thorough, investigation of a number of email services (namely, Office365 and G Suite) and the details of that investigation and the resultant tentative recommendation of G Suite Basic, can be found in **Appendix B**.
- 5.6. The cost for purchasing the G Suite Basic email service for the canrc.org email will be \$6000 USD per year, adding a total amount of \$18,000 USD to the CWEB's budget. This amount has been included in the budget (see Appendix A) and the CWEB recommends that GS 2019 leave an allowance for those funds to be used for the purchase of the G Suite Basic email service if a further investigation of the service indicates that this service is a fit for the churches.
- 5.7. The CWEB recognizes that this aspect of our activities could be seen to go beyond our understood mandate of providing email services to the churches, but we felt it prudent to proactively address what we saw to be a growing concern among the ministers when it came to the effectiveness and use of the canrc.org email service.

## **6. WEBHOSTING FOR INDIVIDUAL CHURCHES**

- 6.1. CWEB's mandate has historically included provisions similar to "*provide web services and email services to the churches and to serve the churches with advice with regard to setting up their own websites.*" (Acts of Synod 2013, Article 92, §4.3.4) This was omitted from the mandate by Synod Dunnville 2016, but it is not clear if this was intentional. We have continued to provide site hosting and email forwarding on an *ad hoc* basis, as we have been able to do this at no additional cost. As part of our transition to a new hosting platform for the federation website, we will no longer have this ability.
- 6.2. Currently, only two congregations, Guelph (Emmanuel) and Guelph (Living Word) still have their sites hosted on our servers. We will inform these congregations that our current hosting for these sites will expire in fall 2020, giving them adequate time to make alternative arrangements.
- 6.3. The CWEB recommends that this be explicitly confirmed by GS 2019 (see §8.1.4)

## **7. COMPOSITION OF CWEB**

- 7.1. When Synod 2016 convened, br. Jeremy Koopmans's 6-year term on the committee was coming to an end, and Rev. Bredenhof had recently departed for Australia, leaving two openings on the four-person committee. Br. Jeremy Koopmans indicated that he was willing to serve a second six-year term, and Synod appointed him to this position. Synod also appointed Rev. Anthony Roukema as a replacement for Rev. Bredenhof. Br. Jonathan Reinink and br. Darryl Shpak remained as the other two members of the committee.
- 7.2. As of Synod 2019, the terms of br. Jonathan Reinink and br. Darryl Shpak are completed. CWEB will be sending a list of nominees for potential consideration by Synod under separate cover to be held in confidence and presented to the committee appointed by Synod to deal with the matter.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1. The CWEB recommends that GS Edmonton (Immanuel) 2019 decide:
  - 8.1.1. To approve the budget of \$28,737.15 for the period 2019-2021, with the understanding that \$25,714.29 of that amount is earmarked for the potential purchase of G Suite Basic for the canrc.org email service;
  - 8.1.2. To appoint two new members to the committee with six-year terms;
  - 8.1.3. To request the Standing Committee for the Book of Praise seek an arrangement with copyright holders which would allow the entire Book of Praise to be hosted on the official website;
  - 8.1.4. To confirm that website hosting for the churches is no longer part of the CWEB's mandate.
  - 8.1.5. To send a letter of thanks to Jonathan Reinink and Jason Bouwman for their work on the federation website, as well as a letter to Rev. Jon Chase thanking him for his work digitizing (scanning and OCRing) the synodical reports.
- 8.2. The CWEB also recommends that General Synod Edmonton (Immanuel) 2019 give the committee the following mandate:
  - 8.2.1. To maintain the existing website and associated technical functions;
  - 8.2.2. To revise the content of the website whenever necessary, including:
    - 8.2.2.1. Posting news items and documents upon submission by authorized individuals,
    - 8.2.2.2. Annually auditing the site's information against the yearbook, and
    - 8.2.2.3. Maintaining pages for synodical committees with their current mandates and contact information;
  - 8.2.3. To make synod reports available on the web before the next synod;
  - 8.2.4. To provide email services to the ministers of the churches;

- 8.2.5. To pursue - and as soon as is feasibly possible, purchase - an email service for the canrc.org emails that will reliably provide quality email service and usability;
- 8.2.6. To further investigate, in connection with 8.2.5, the use of the canrc.org clerk emails and determine a cost effective and reliable solution that will be a fit for the churches;
- 8.2.7. And to serve General Synod 2022 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod, including a financial statement and a proposed budget.

Respectfully submitted by your committee,

Rev. A. Roukema, convener (Burlington, ON)

J. Koopmans (St. Albert, AB)

J. Reinink (Beamsville, ON)

D. Shpak (Winnipeg, MB)

## APPENDIX A: FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND BUDGET

	<b>Budget 2016-2018 (CAD)</b>	<b>Actual 2016-2018 (CAD)</b>	<b>Projected 2019-2021 (USD)</b>	<b>Projected 2019-2021 (CAD)</b>
<b>Website hosting</b>	\$900.00	\$1,022.06	\$2,088.00	\$2,982.86
<b>Domain name registration</b>	\$50.00	\$36.90	\$28.00	\$40.00
<b>Document scanning</b>	\$3,250.00	\$3,250.00		-
<b>Website redesign</b>	\$5,800.00	\$8,800.00		-
<b>Email hosting</b>	-	-	\$18,000.00	\$25,714.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,000.00</b>	<b>\$13,108.96</b>		<b>\$28,737.15</b>

### CURRENCY

All the committees anticipated expenses for 2019-2021 are in US dollars. Over the last three years, the Canadian dollar has fluctuated between roughly 0.68-0.83 USD. For purposes of this budget, we have used a pessimistic value of 1.00 CAD = 0.70 USD.

### WEBSITE HOSTING PLAN

The website hosting costs can be broken down into the following areas:

	<b>Budget 2016-2018 (CAD)</b>	<b>Actual 2016-2018 (CAD)</b>	<b>Projected 2019-2021 (USD)</b>	<b>Projected 2019-2021 (CAD)</b>
<b>Dreamhost</b>	\$900.00	\$1,022.06		-
<b>Heroku</b>			\$828.00	\$1,182.86
<b>Algolia</b>			\$1,260.00	\$1,800.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$900.00</b>	<b>\$1,022.06</b>	<b>\$2,088.00</b>	<b>\$2,982.86</b>

As detailed earlier in the report, we plan to migrate all our services off Dreamhost. Our current hosting plan expires in October 2020, and we do not plan to renew it after that. The new website is hosted on two different services. The site itself is hosted on Heroku, at a cost of \$23 USD / month, and the search indexing is provided by Algolia, at a cost of \$35 USD / month.

### DOMAIN NAME REGISTRATION

This is the fee for renewing the “canrc.org” domain name. Rates with our current provider are \$14 USD per year. It was last renewed in October 2018, for a two-year period.

### DOCUMENT SCANNING

Br. Jonathan Chase has been reimbursed \$3,250 for the work he has done scanning past Synodical reports. This project is now complete and no further funds are necessary.

## WEBSITE REDESIGN

Synod Dunnville 2016 increased CWEB's budget to accommodate the new mandate to modernize the official website. In recognition of the value of the work to the federation, both Compass Creative and br. Reinink did this work at below market rates; still, the budget allocation was found to be inadequate. The consistory of Carman East approved additional spending of \$3,000 in October 2018.

## EMAIL HOSTING

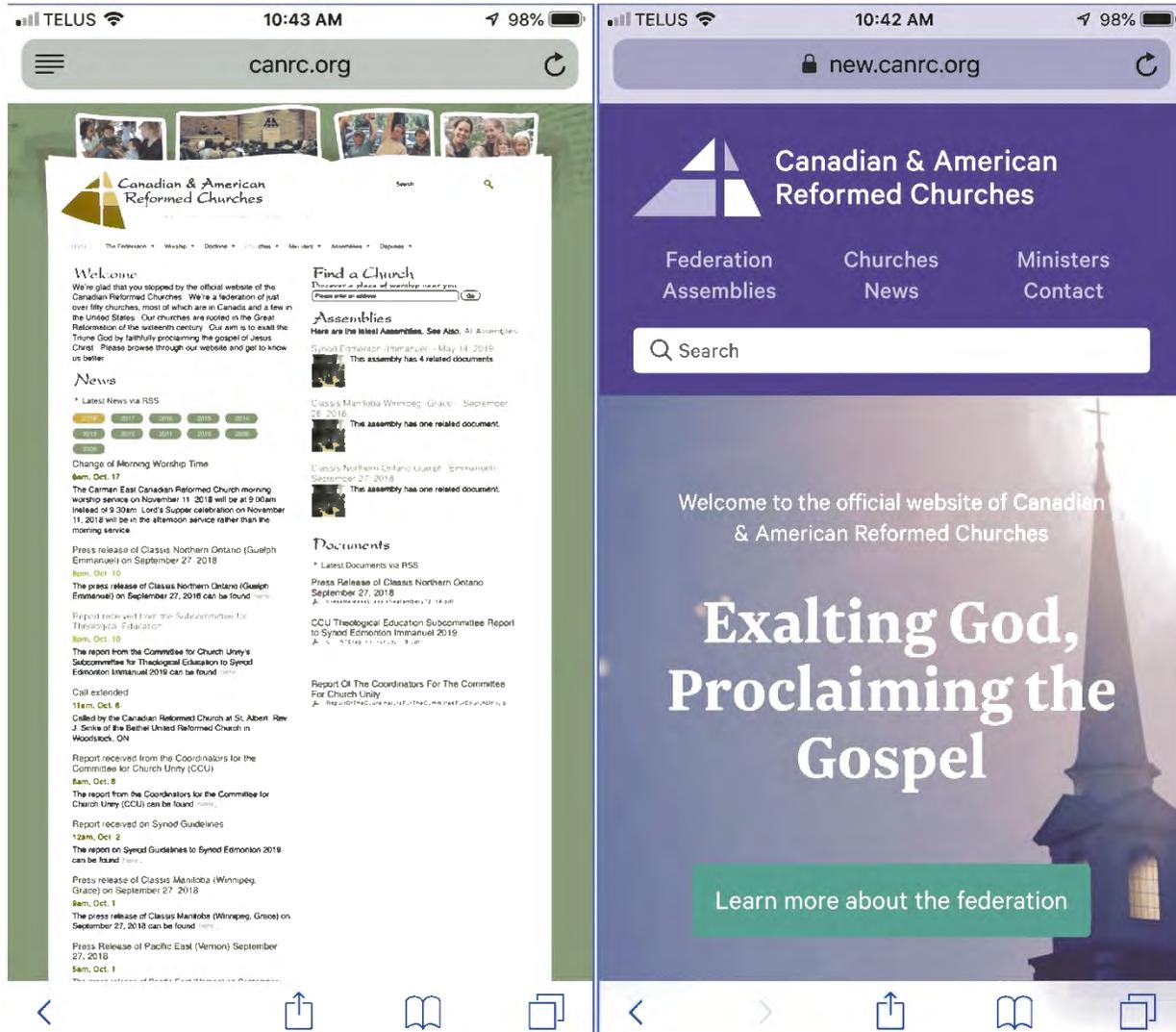
The G Suite Ready Basic service recommended by CWEB is a subscription service with a cost of \$5 USD per user per month. We anticipate roughly 100 active email accounts, costing \$6,000 USD/year.

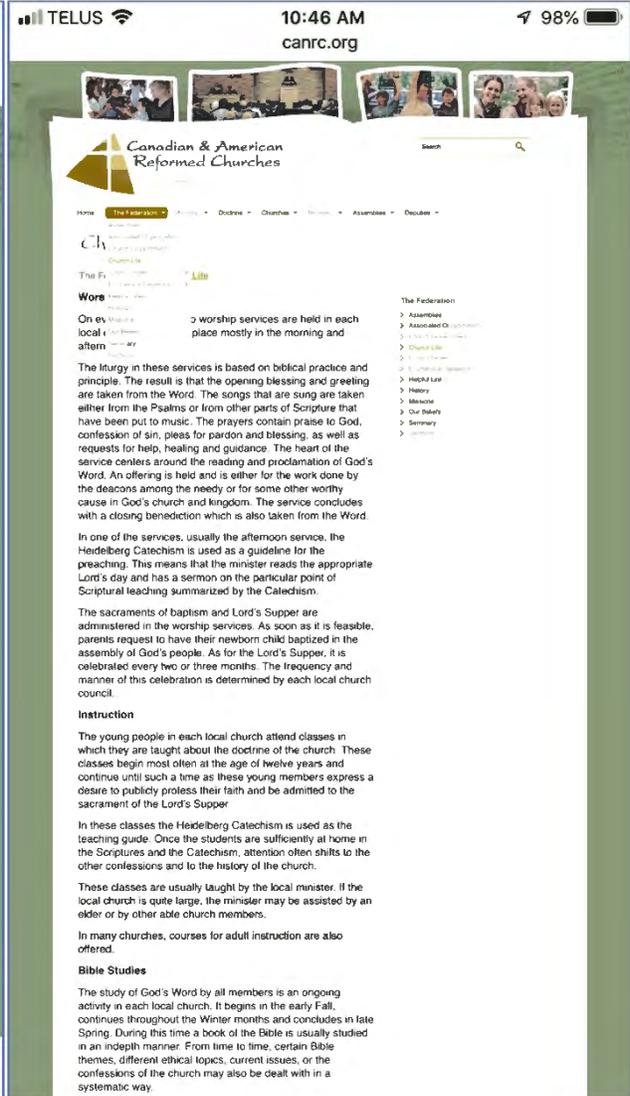
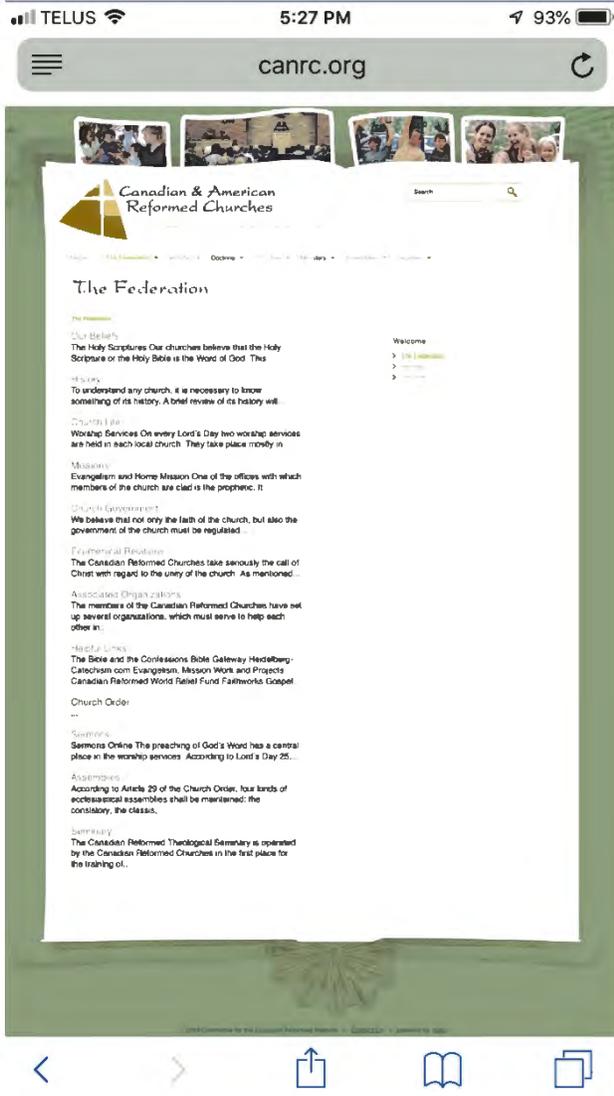
## APPENDIX B: G SUITE BASIC FOR CANRC.ORG EMAIL SERVICE

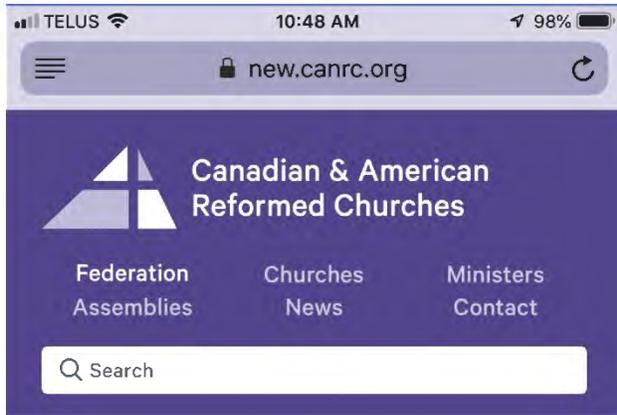
1. The CWEB has performed an initial, although fairly thorough, investigation of a number of email services (namely, Office365 and G Suite) and tentatively recommends G Suite Basic by Google Cloud. The reasons for making this recommendation are as follows:
  - 1.1. This service will provide the following benefits:
    - 1.1.1. An email with a professional canrc.org email address, accessible via the web with the same interface as Gmail.
    - 1.1.2. Ease of use and configuration of email for any existing desktop email application (such as Outlook, Mail, Mozilla Thunderbird, etc)
    - 1.1.3. Ease of use and configuration of canrc.org email on phones and tablets (Apple or off brand)
    - 1.1.4. An effective and proven spam filter.
    - 1.1.5. Access to the G Suite web applications for editing documents, spreadsheets and presentations, as well as 30 GB cloud storage on Google Drive per user.
  - 1.2. The use of G Suite Basic would also allow the CWEB to move the ministers mailing list into this service as well, allowing us to make the contents of the list accessible online and searchable to the ministers.
2. Cost related considerations for the purchase G Suite Basic for the canrc.org email service.
  - 2.1. The cost for the current email hosting service, Dreamhost, is approximately \$300 per year and would total approximately \$900 for 2016-2019. As was pointed out in §5 of the CWEB report, this service is very affordable, but does not actually provide a meaningful or useable email service for our ministers.
  - 2.2. The cost for the G Suite Basic service would involve an ongoing cost of \$5.00 USD/user/month. We anticipate roughly one hundred (100) active email accounts, which would mean a cost of \$6,000 USD (approximately \$8600 CDN) per year to the churches and would total \$18,000 USD (approximately \$25,800 CDN) for the CWEB's 2019-2022 budget.
  - 2.3. Since this service is billed per user, the CWEB would recommend no longer providing clerk email addresses to individual churches.
    - 2.3.1. The CWEB recommends this solution cautiously because it will potentially impact churches who use the canrc.org email service for their clerk emails. Since investigating solutions that would provide improved email services for the ministers was not actually part of our mandate from GS 2016, the CWEB has not closely investigated how many churches are actually using the canrc.org email addresses they have in our system.
    - 2.3.2. It should be made clear that most churches are already using a different solution for hosting their email and at present it appears that all of the church 'canrc.org' emails are 'forward only' emails, meaning that the email they actually use, and often publish, is not actually the canrc.org email (ie. [clerk@anycanrc.canrc.org](mailto:clerk@anycanrc.canrc.org) or [bulletin@anychurch.canrc.org](mailto:bulletin@anychurch.canrc.org) is being forwarded to [clerk@anycanrc.ca](mailto:clerk@anycanrc.ca) or [anychurchbulletin@gmail.com](mailto:anychurchbulletin@gmail.com))
    - 2.3.3. There are solutions available to us if churches rely on the forwarding service, but the CWEB, because this was not part of our mandate, has not fully investigated these solutions and whether they would be a fit for how the churches currently use the canrc.org emails. We are also unsure as to whether the canrc.org emails are more of convenience for which the churches can find an easy solution, or if they are even aware they have a canrc.org email account.
  - 2.4. For this reason, the CWEB needs time (and an actual mandate) to investigate before they actually make the purchase and initiate the changeover, and hence the tentative nature of this recommendation. This recommendation holds much promise for the use of the canrc.org email service, but it also has some variables that have not been confirmed.

# APPENDIX C: SCREENSHOT COMPARISON

## COMPARISON OF THE MOBILE VERSIONS:



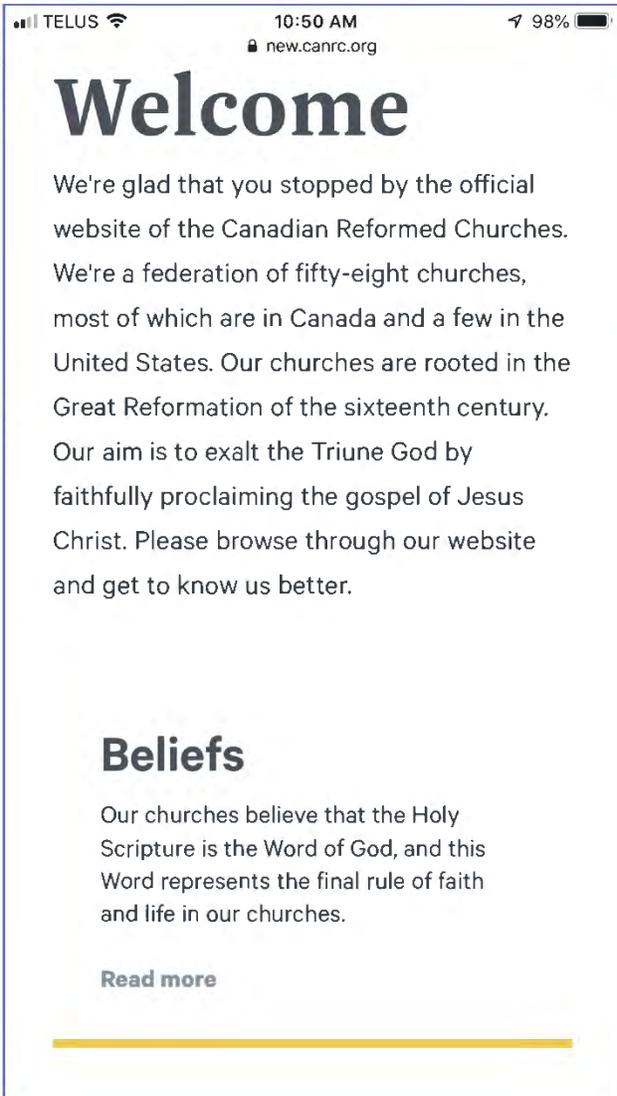




## Federation

# Welcome

We're glad that you stopped by the official website of the Canadian Reformed Churches. We're a federation of fifty-eight churches, most of which are in Canada and a few in the United States. Our churches are rooted in the Great Reformation of the sixteenth century. Our aim is to exalt the Triune God by faithfully proclaiming the gospel of Jesus



## Beliefs

Our churches believe that the Holy Scripture is the Word of God, and this Word represents the final rule of faith and life in our churches.

[Read more](#)

## Worship

On every Lord's Day we meet for worship in each local church. Prayer, singing, and giving key aspects of our worship.

[Read more](#)

## Study

Our churches participate in bible studies, Catechism instruction, office bearer

## Study

Our churches participate in bible studies, Catechism instruction, office bearer training, and pastoral training at our seminary.

[Read more](#)

## Publications

Information about our publications, including our Book of Praise, the Clarion Magazine, and other related publications.

[Read more](#)

## Missions

We participate in many different forms of mission, including local evangelism, summer camps, native missions and

COMPARISON OF DESKTOP VERSIONS OF NEW SITE AND OLD SITE:





### General Synod

- Edmonton (Immanuel) 2019
- Dunville 2016
- Carman (West) 2013
- [View full archive...](#)

### Regional Synod West

- Aldergrove 2017
- Abbotsford 2015
- Langley 2012
- [View full archive...](#)

### Regional Synod East

- Smithville 2018
- Grand Rapids 2017
- Grand Valley 2015
- [View full archive...](#)

### Classis Pacific West

- Cloverdale September 2018
- Willoughby Heights April 2018
- Surrey (Maranatha) December 2017
- [View full archive...](#)

### Classis Pacific East

- Vernon September 2018
- Vernon April 2018
- Lynden February 2018
- [View full archive...](#)

### Classis Alberta

- Edmonton (Immanuel) September 2018
- Coaldale March 2018
- Calgary September 2017
- [View full archive...](#)

### Classis Manitoba

### Classis Ontario West

### Classis Northern Ontario

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu and the 'Assemblies' page content. The navigation menu includes: Home, The Federation, Worship, Doctrine, Churches, Ministers, Assemblies, Deputies. The 'Assemblies' page features a search bar, a breadcrumb trail 'The Federation > Assemblies', and a list of assembly types: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod. A 'General Synod' section provides details about the 2016 meeting in Dunville, ON. A sidebar titled 'The Federation' contains a list of links: Assemblies, Associated Organizations, Church Government, Church Life, Church Order, Ecumenical Relations, Helpful Links, History, Missions, Our Beliefs, Seminary, and Sermons.

Government

# Church Order

The Church Order of Dort, which was adopted by the Synod of Dort in 1618-19, has its roots in the early organization of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. As early as 1563, these churches began to meet in ecclesiastical assemblies, and in the next eight years the rudiments of the church order were developed and put into practice. For the most part, the decisions of the assemblies in this period leaned heavily on the church orders of the Reformed churches in France and Geneva.

The persecution and the ensuing expansion of the churches in this period fuelled the desire of church leaders to unite the brotherhood in one federation. In 1568, during the darkest days of the persecution, leaders of Reformed churches of the Netherlands met in Wesel to address the great organizational needs in the churches. In 1571, the first Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands met in the city of Emden, which at the time served as a haven for many persecuted Reformed believers.

The church order adopted at Emden was revised at the Synods of Dort (1574 and 1578), Middelburg (1581), and The Hague (1586), before being adopted by the Synod of Dort in 1618-19. Since this Synod of Dort the Church Order remained in force until 1816, when King William I set it aside and introduced a new Regulation governing the life of the churches.

## I. Introduction

- 1 Purpose and Division

## II. Offices And Supervision Of Doctrine

- 2 The Offices
- 3 The Calling to Office
- 4 Eligibility for the Ministry
- 5 Ordination and Installation of Ministers of the Word
- 6 Bound to a Church
- 7 Recent Converts
- 8 Exceptional Gifts
- 9 From One Church to Another
- 10 Proper Support
- 11 Dismissal
- 12 Bound for Life
- 13 Retirement of Ministers





[Classis Pacific West](#)
[Classis Pacific East](#)
[Classis Alberta](#)
[Classis Manitoba](#)
[Classis Ontario West](#)  
[Classis Northern Ontario](#)
[Classis Central Ontario](#)
[Classis Niagara](#)

  
**Classis Pacific West**





**Canadian & American Reformed Churches**

in Him we live and move and have our being

[Home](#)
[The Federation](#)
[Worship](#)
[Doctrine](#)
[Churches](#)
[Ministers](#)
[Assemblies](#)
[Deputies](#)

## All Churches

### Find a Church

Discover a place of worship near you.

### Churches by Classis

- > [Classis Alberta](#)
- > [Classis Pacific East](#)
- > [Classis Pacific West](#)
- > [Classis Manitoba](#)
- > [Classis Ontario West](#)
- > [Classis Niagara](#)
- > [Classis Northern Ontario](#)
- > [Classis Central Ontario](#)

**Classis Alberta**  
 Barrhead, Alberta  
<http://barrheadcaarc.ca/>

 6105 43 Street Barrhead, AB  
Get Directions | Large Map

**Calgary, Alberta**  
<http://www.calgarycaarc.com/>  
 (403) 235 - 0646  
 10 Hart Estates Boulevard NE, Calgary, AB  
Get Directions | Large Map

# Ministers

Search...



**Pastor Paul Aasman**  
Missionary (Streetlight Ministries)  
Hamilton (Streetlight), Ontario



**Rev. Richard Aasman**  
Minister  
Edmonton (Providence), Alberta



**Rev. Douwe Agema**  
Minister  
Guelph (Living Word), Ontario



## All Ministers

- A B C D E F G H
- I J K L M N O P
- Q R S T U V W X
- Y Z

### A

**Pastor Paul Aasman**  
Missionary (Streetlight Ministries)



**Rev. Richard Aasman**  
Minister of the Word



**Rev. Douwe Agema**  
Minister of the Word



### B

**Rev. Ben J. Berends**  
Minister emeritus



**Rev. Ralph Boersema**

# APPENDIX D: GOOGLE ANALYTICS FOR THE FEDERATION WEBSITE (CANRC.ORG)





Country	Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions		
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration	Goal Conversion Rate	Goal Completions	Goal Value

1. Canada	0	79,360	452,995	78.00%	1.63	00:01:11	0.00%	0	\$0.00
2. United States	0	15,634	32,541	73.18%	1.89	00:01:19	0.00%	0	\$0.00
3. Australia	0	5,260	27,002	73.80%	1.86	00:01:17	0.00%	0	\$0.00
4. Netherlands	0	5,303	10,859	65.72%	2.28	00:01:43	0.00%	0	\$0.00
5. South Korea	0	1,564	3,895	41.54%	2.86	00:02:40	0.00%	0	\$0.00
6. South Africa	0	1,162	2,646	63.57%	2.45	00:02:20	0.00%	0	\$0.00
7. Russia	0	1,672	2,344	88.27%	1.19	00:01:24	0.00%	0	\$0.00
8. United Kingdom	0	1,229	2,003	71.14%	1.90	00:01:26	0.00%	0	\$0.00
9. China	0	1,190	1,475	81.02%	1.89	00:01:31	0.00%	0	\$0.00
10. Brazil	0	798	1,206	48.26%	3.06	00:03:51	0.00%	0	\$0.00
Total:	100.04%	119,789	547,462	76.71%	1.69	00:01:14	0.00%	0	\$0.00
% of Total:	(0.00%)	(66.22%)	(82.74%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0)	(\$0.00)
% of Total:	(0.00%)	(13.05%)	(5.94%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0)	(0.00%)
% of Total:	(0.00%)	(4.39%)	(4.93%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0)	(0.00%)
% of Total:	(0.00%)	(1.31%)	(0.71%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0)	(0.00%)
% of Total:	(0.00%)	(0.97%)	(0.48%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0)	(0.00%)
% of Total:	(0.00%)	(1.40%)	(0.43%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0)	(0.00%)
% of Total:	(0.00%)	(1.03%)	(0.37%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0)	(0.00%)
% of Total:	(0.00%)	(0.99%)	(0.27%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0)	(0.00%)
% of Total:	(0.00%)	(0.67%)	(0.22%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0)	(0.00%)

Rows 1 - 10 of 188

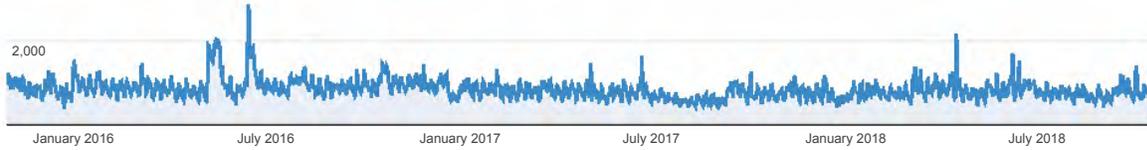
Pages

All Users  
100.00% Pageviews

Nov 1, 2015 - Oct 16, 2018

Explorer

Pageviews  
4,000



Page	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit	Page Value
	<b>927,137</b> % of Total: 100.00% (927,137)	<b>762,290</b> % of Total: 100.00% (762,290)	<b>00:01:47</b> Avg for View: 00:01:47 (0.00%)	<b>547,455</b> % of Total: 100.00% (547,455)	<b>76.71%</b> Avg for View: 76.71% (0.00%)	<b>59.05%</b> Avg for View: 59.05% (0.00%)	<b>\$0.00</b> % of Total: 0.00% (\$0.00)
1. /	<b>550,361</b> (59.36%)	<b>480,045</b> (62.97%)	<b>00:02:46</b>	<b>471,312</b> (86.09%)	<b>80.13%</b>	<b>76.80%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
2. /?churches=All	<b>13,800</b> (1.49%)	<b>8,615</b> (1.13%)	<b>00:01:08</b>	<b>3,682</b> (0.67%)	<b>39.90%</b>	<b>29.15%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
3. /?page=56	<b>12,983</b> (1.40%)	<b>6,974</b> (0.91%)	<b>00:01:56</b>	<b>3,691</b> (0.67%)	<b>47.98%</b>	<b>43.46%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
4. /search.php	<b>10,170</b> (1.10%)	<b>6,879</b> (0.90%)	<b>00:01:10</b>	<b>244</b> (0.04%)	<b>37.30%</b>	<b>27.46%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
5. /?page=23	<b>8,843</b> (0.95%)	<b>5,960</b> (0.78%)	<b>00:01:07</b>	<b>3,704</b> (0.68%)	<b>56.70%</b>	<b>49.07%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
6. /?assembly=247	<b>8,793</b> (0.95%)	<b>6,884</b> (0.90%)	<b>00:02:38</b>	<b>3,009</b> (0.55%)	<b>52.54%</b>	<b>52.94%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
7. /?ministers=All	<b>7,263</b> (0.78%)	<b>3,983</b> (0.52%)	<b>00:00:44</b>	<b>1,230</b> (0.22%)	<b>24.15%</b>	<b>14.55%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
8. /?page=9	<b>4,726</b> (0.51%)	<b>3,152</b> (0.41%)	<b>00:00:24</b>	<b>313</b> (0.06%)	<b>27.80%</b>	<b>9.84%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
9. /?page=26	<b>4,596</b> (0.50%)	<b>3,296</b> (0.43%)	<b>00:00:34</b>	<b>850</b> (0.16%)	<b>48.35%</b>	<b>18.80%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
10. /?page=31	<b>4,224</b> (0.46%)	<b>2,979</b> (0.39%)	<b>00:00:46</b>	<b>1,798</b> (0.33%)	<b>28.87%</b>	<b>21.21%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
11. /?churches=Table	<b>4,111</b> (0.44%)	<b>2,537</b> (0.33%)	<b>00:02:40</b>	<b>624</b> (0.11%)	<b>48.56%</b>	<b>35.51%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
12. /?page=30	<b>3,964</b> (0.43%)	<b>2,767</b> (0.36%)	<b>00:00:49</b>	<b>1,709</b> (0.31%)	<b>29.26%</b>	<b>22.53%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
13. /?y=2016	<b>3,893</b> (0.42%)	<b>3,389</b> (0.44%)	<b>00:01:35</b>	<b>479</b> (0.09%)	<b>72.65%</b>	<b>57.49%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
14. /?page=393	<b>3,881</b> (0.42%)	<b>3,302</b> (0.43%)	<b>00:03:26</b>	<b>3,103</b> (0.57%)	<b>83.47%</b>	<b>78.41%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
15. /?page=55	<b>3,437</b> (0.37%)	<b>2,085</b> (0.27%)	<b>00:00:22</b>	<b>871</b> (0.16%)	<b>12.28%</b>	<b>8.84%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
16. /?page=502	<b>3,212</b> (0.35%)	<b>2,506</b> (0.33%)	<b>00:01:58</b>	<b>110</b> (0.02%)	<b>50.91%</b>	<b>52.02%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
17. /?page=19	<b>3,170</b> (0.34%)	<b>2,343</b> (0.31%)	<b>00:02:54</b>	<b>968</b> (0.18%)	<b>62.81%</b>	<b>49.53%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
18. /?page=12	<b>2,978</b> (0.32%)	<b>2,434</b> (0.32%)	<b>00:01:14</b>	<b>658</b> (0.12%)	<b>51.06%</b>	<b>30.12%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
19. /?page=22	<b>2,700</b> (0.29%)	<b>1,851</b> (0.24%)	<b>00:00:19</b>	<b>89</b> (0.02%)	<b>52.81%</b>	<b>9.78%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)
20. /?page=15	<b>2,623</b> (0.28%)	<b>2,263</b> (0.30%)	<b>00:03:14</b>	<b>822</b> (0.15%)	<b>64.23%</b>	<b>47.20%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b> (0.00%)

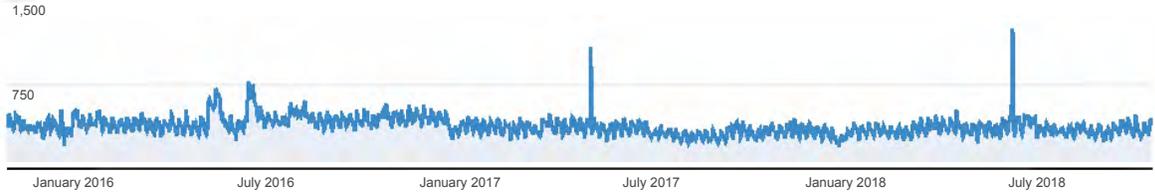
**Audience Overview**

Nov 1, 2015 - Oct 16, 2018

All Users  
100.00% Users

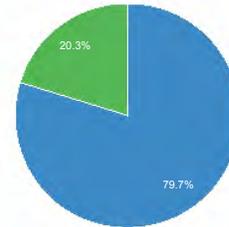
**Overview**

**Users**



<b>Users</b> 120,694	<b>New Users</b> 119,789	<b>Sessions</b> 547,462
<b>Number of Sessions per User</b> 4.54	<b>Pageviews</b> 927,137	<b>Pages / Session</b> 1.69
<b>Avg. Session Duration</b> 00:01:14	<b>Bounce Rate</b> 76.71%	

■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor



Language	Users	% Users
1. en-us	43,939	53.58%
2. en-ca	19,681	24.00%
3. en-gb	8,424	10.27%
4. nl-nl	1,708	2.08%
5. en-au	1,565	1.91%
6. nl	933	1.14%
7. c	833	1.02%
8. ko	736	0.90%
9. ko-kr	657	0.80%
10. ru	553	0.67%

8.2.12 Report on Needy Student Fund



**Report by the  
Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie**

**To  
General Synod Edmonton 2019**

**Regarding the  
Committee for Needy Students' Fund 2015 - 2017**

## Contents

<b>Section 1 – Executive Summary</b>	<b>Pg 3-5</b>
<b>Section 2 – CNSF Mandate and Support Guidelines</b>	<b>Pg 6-10</b>
<b>Section 3 – 2015-2017 Financial Statements</b>	<b>Pg 11</b>
<b>Section 4 – Committee Membership</b>	<b>Pg 12</b>

## Section 1 - Executive Summary

### Background

General Synod Burlington 2010 founded the *Committee for Needy Students of Theology* (cited herein as the Committee for Needy Students' Fund CNSF) as a centralized federal body responsible to work with all member classis of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. The CNSF was tasked to administrate financial support for all members of these churches who are enrolled as students at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. (See Section 2 – Synodical Mandate and Support Guidelines) Synod Burlington appointed the CNSF to operate under the direction and counsel of the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie. (Acts of Synod 2010 Art. 91.4) The CNSF has since endeavoured to fulfill this mandate, and reports back to each successive General Synod. The CNSF also reports annually to all member churches regarding funds dispensed and assessments per communicant member for the upcoming calendar year. The last report submitted by the CNSF to Synod was to General Synod Dunnville 2016. This report included CNSF activities from 2012 – 2014. Synod Dunnville reappointed Grassie-Covenant for the purposes of administering the CNSF for the period of 2015 - 2017. (Acts of Synod 2016 Art 108)

### Current Situation

#### *i) Funds Dispensed & Students Supported*

This report will outline developments and funds dispensed inclusive of the years 2015 – 2017. The Committee has financially supported a total of **thirteen (13)** individual students since during this time. Between 2015-2017 a total of **\$203,960.00** was disbursed for costs relative to student grants and administrative costs. This is down \$157,289.00 from the previous triennial total of \$361,249.00 reported to Synod Dunnville 2016. The Committee endeavours to maintain an account surplus to address emergent or unexpected expenditures as students present them. All funds are held in an account with the Meridian Credit Union. The Committee maintains fiscal accountability by means of dual signatories. Annual audits are performed on year-end Committee financial statements, and reported to the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church Council.

#### *ii) Assessments*

Churches continue to be assessed annually based on projected enrolment and anticipated fees. Individual church assessment is calculated on the membership base of the previous year as listed in the annual yearbook of the churches. The Committee sends assessment notices to member churches by November of each year. Typically follow-up correspondence is required to ensure payment. Churches are encouraged to respond to

assessments in a timely fashion. Rates per communicant member have decreased to \$3.00 from \$12.00 over the past three years. It can be noted with thankfulness that all member churches were able to fulfill their annual assessments during the period reviewed by this report.

### ***iii) Grant Application Process and Student Relationships***

Students who are eligible for financial assistance are made aware of the Fund and application process by means of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) website. An electronic link directs applicants towards the registrar where they are able to secure appropriate forms and contact information for the CNSF. The Committee operates an email account that serves as the primary communication tool with students. Upon receipt of budget requests for aid, visits are scheduled for each student to ensure that giving is conducted in a spirit of humility and brotherly love. This process assists the Committee with confidence that the funds dispensed are being granted to men that are convicted in their path to the ministry. With thankfulness the Committee can report that there is good cooperation and harmony between students and members of the CNSF.

Synod Dunville 2016 directed the CNSF to review the 2013 CNSF Support Guidelines after receiving correspondence from three churches relative to adequate granting principals. The CNSF undertook this review and discovered that although the historical context regarding the provision of support provided adequate and timely support for students, the guidelines in fact did not reflect actual practice. As a result changes were made to the guidelines that better reflected the function of the NCSF in its responsibility to balance the need for aid with sound financial stewardship. The churches were advised of these changes by means of a letter complete with amended Support Guidelines in April 2017. (See Section 2)

### ***iv) Charitable Status Designation & Income Tax Act Compliance***

The CNSF has made legal inquiries to ensure that the collection and disbursement of funds on behalf of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches is in compliance with the Income Tax Act (ITA) and the Canadian Revenue Agency. The information below is respectfully submitted as a result of legal counsel provided to the CNSF.

The ITA states that charities (i.e. CNSF supporting churches) must use their own resources to carry out their own charitable activity. There is an exception that deems a transfer from one registered Canadian charity to another Canadian charity to be its own activity. This allows Grassie-Covenant to carry on CNSF activities on behalf of other churches. Each charitable organization must cite as one of its stated purposes the activity for which it intends to extend charitable donations. As such, churches supporting the CNSF should ensure their registration with the CRA under the Income Tax Act reflects the activity of Fellowship (work of deacons, work

as a denomination, supporting students training in theology), and more broadly Evangelism, Mission and Outreach. It is likely that most churches already have these purposes stated in their Declaration of Trust. While prescriptive language is not specifically required under the act, some general reference to the objects stated above may mitigate potential for non-compliance.

Given the above information, Grassie-Covenant *must own the activity* of the CNSF in order to be compliant with the ITA. This does not preclude the ability of the federation to ensure conformity through the function of a Synod, attaching conditions and designations regarding the use of transferred funds (assessments). Notwithstanding this, it is clear that Synod may not direct a church to carry on the activities of supporting needy theological students. Recommendation options for Synod going forward are listed below. Both options have equal merit, ensuring that the organization (church) that holds the charitable status under the ITA is formally adopting the activity (CNSF) as its own. The options presented below are left to Synod Edmonton to consider after appropriate discussion and submissions.

#### **Recommendation Options to Synod Edmonton 2019:**

- 1) *Request* Grassie-Covenant (or any other church) to administer the CNSF with a provision that provides Grassie-Covenant council the autonomy to find an alternate church if council determines not to take on the charitable activity of the CNSF.
- 2) Synod may also appoint one or two churches as alternates to Grassie-Covenant, given the same conditions exist wherein Grassie-Covenant council determines not to take on the charitable activity of the CNSF.

Given the legal counsel provided to the CNSF, Grassie-Covenant will commence financial reporting of all assessments received from churches by means of its' annual Charity Return (T3010 Form). Accordingly, each church will receive annual tax donation receipts from the CNSF. In order to reflect the parameters above, it is anticipated that some editing work may be required on the CNSF mandate as is listed in this report. Grassie-Covenant or any such other church as requested by General Synod Edmonton 2019 will/should report any mandate alterations to Synod 2022.

#### **Summary**

The *CNSF* continues to be blessed with the requisite financial means to support students preparing for ministry in our Lord's church. We are thankful for God's providing hand, and delight in our task to assist in equipping future pastors and shepherds for His flock. All Praise for these gifts is due to our faithful Father in heaven!

## **Section 2 – CNSF Mandate and Support Guidelines**

### **Committee for the Needy Students of Theology Mandate**

#### **Introduction:**

#### **1. The Committee for the Needy Students Fund (Background):**

a. The Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie, Ontario ("Grassie Church") was originally appointed by General Synod Burlington 2010 as the "Committee for Needy Students of Theology" (the "Committee"), responsible for extending financial aid to Canadian and American Reformed students of theology who are in need of financial support, and are enrolled at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (the "Seminary").

b. The Consistory with the Deacons (the "Council") of the Grassie Church has appointed a committee consisting of four members of the church plus a liaison to the Council. The Committee will tend to all the day-to-day affairs of the fund.

#### **2. The Mandate of the Committee is as follows:**

a. To propose to the Council a mandate for administering the Fund, and procedures for governing this Committee, within the mandates given to the Grassie Church by the General Synod's of the Canadian Reformed Churches,

b. To propose to Council guidelines for the support of needy students (refer to Synod's recommendations).

c. To establish the need for the support of students prior to each school year. Eligible students are encouraged to contact the committee by September 1st outlining the specifics of their request,

d. To annually (each Fall) assess the churches in the Canadian and American Reformed Church federation (the "Federation") , based on the number of communicant members in the current yearbook, in order to anticipate funding required for the upcoming calendar year,

e. To report all activities on an ongoing basis to the Council via the Council liaison, and

f. To report annually to each church in the Federation of the activities of the Committee. The report to the churches will be completed in the Spring, and will include an audited financial statement. In addition, the Committee will report tri-annually to the General Synod its activities and situation.

#### **3. Committee Structure**

a. The structure of the Committee shall consist of a Chairman, a Vice-all, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and a Council member as liaison.

#### **4. Duties of Committee Members:**

a. The Chairman is responsible for directing the activities of the committee in fulfilling its mandate. The chairman will call a meeting at regular intervals and as required.

b. The Vice-All acts as Chairman and Secretary in their absence, and assists the Committee with carrying out its mandate.

Committee for Needy Students' Fund Report – General Synod Edmonton 2019

October 13, 2018

c. The Treasurer is responsible for managing the receipts and disbursements of funds, and, together with the Chairman and Vice-All, is a signing officer on the bank account. In addition, the Treasurer

- i. Will be responsible for managing supporting documentation for all expenditures
- ii. Is to submit a bi-monthly statement of receipts and expenditures to the committee
- iii. Sets the annual assessment to be submitted to the churches in the Federation, with the Committee
- iv. Prepares the annual statement in January of each year, and presents it to the Committee for approval, and
- v. Assists the church appointed auditors in their task.

d. The Secretary is to keep minutes of all meetings and to distribute them electronically shortly after the meeting. The secretary shall manage and retain all incoming and outgoing communications. Outgoing communications shall be approved by the committee; urgent matters of communication must be reviewed and approved by the Chairman or Vice-All. The approval of out-gong communication does not apply to the matter of miscellaneous correspondence.

e. The Liaison is to keep Council informed of the activities of the Committee, to relay requests by the Committee for appointments and other matters, and to inform the Committee of decisions of Council that apply to the Committee.

#### 5. Appointments:

Committee members are appointed by the Council, and will generally serve a four-year term, with the option of one additional term at the discretion of Council. Members will generally retire in rotation.

#### 6. Auditors:

Council shall appoint two auditors to examine the books of the Treasurer at the end of each fiscal year.

#### 7. Report to General Synod:

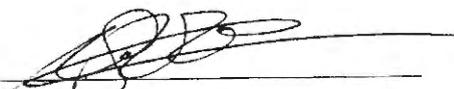
The Committee shall tri-annually submit a report to the Council (eight months prior to the next scheduled General Synod of the Federation), detailing its activities and outcomes, for Council review and submission to Synod in the appropriate timeframe.

October 18, 2017

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date: Dec 25 2017

K. Harink  
Council Liaison

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date: Dec 6 2017

W. Vis  
NSF Chairman



Needy Students Fund  
PO Box 641  
Smithville ON L0R 2A0  
[needystudentsfund@gmail.com](mailto:needystudentsfund@gmail.com)

April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017

**RE: Needy Student Fund Guideline Amendments**

Dear Brothers,

The Grassie-Covenant CanRC Committee for Needy Students Fund (NSF) has recently reviewed its operating guidelines in response to recommendations from General Synod Dunnville 2016. These recommendations can be found in the Acts of GS Dunnville 2016 Article 108. The acts note that the NSF has completed its mandate, and has done its work faithfully. Synod has reappointed the Grassie-Covenant CanRC NSF and mandated it to consider a review of guidelines in context of letters received from Winnipeg-Redeemer CanRC, Abbotsford CanRC and Willoughby Heights CanRC.

The NSF thanks the churches for their feedback and duly notes the concerns that were expressed. Our review has resulted in updating the guidelines to more accurately reflect the actual practice of the committee. These revisions will continue to ensure that the NSF exercises financial stewardship balanced with rendering charitable aid for theological students in need.

The guidelines changes include the following highlights and clarification.

- Additional unbudgeted student expenses will be funded if submitted with a proper accounting of need and receipts.
- Budget applications are *encouraged* to be submitted by Sept 1<sup>st</sup>, (late applications are discouraged but not excluded in recognition of individual circumstances)
- Elimination of provisions relating to extensive record keeping for pre-budgeted costs
- Deletion of reference to repayment with interest in cases of dismissal
- Monthly vehicle maintenance funding is exclusive of any repairs, replacements or unanticipated expenses (removed from guidelines and referenced in budget form only)
- General formatting of the document to reduce duplicity and enhance clarity and purpose of provisions

Please find the new approved guidelines attached for your information and reference. We remain available for further clarification if required and encourage any questions or comments to be directed to the committee via the undersigned

Yours in Christ's service,

Br. Martin Schulenberg - Secretary  
Grassie-Covenant Needy Students Fund

1



**SUPPORT GUIDELINES  
for the  
Needy Students Fund of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches**

**Providing financial aid to students of the  
"Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary"**

**Preamble**

The primary purpose of financial aid for theological students is to assist in their educational preparation for ministry, by providing aid to those students who demonstrate financial need.

In light of our human nature and that we all need God's Grace and Spirit to guide us, the giving and receiving should be done in a spirit of humility and brotherly love.

Financial aid is administered by the Committee for the Needy Students Fund (the "Committee" and "the Fund", respectively), a committee appointed by the Council of the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church of Grassie. Synod Burlington 2010 and Synod Dunnville 2016 have both appointed the Grassie church to administer this Fund.

**Section 1 Principles**

The following principles are basic to the administration of the Needy Student Fund of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches:

- 1.1. Financial aid shall be restricted to theological students of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches who are enrolled at the Theological Seminary of the Canadian Reformed Churches and who desire the office of minister in these churches.
- 1.2. The student has the primary responsibility for his educational and living expenses. The Fund will augment the student's resources where requested by the student, and approved by the Committee. The Fund is to be used as a last resort. Students are expected to utilize existing personal assets (RRSP's, equity, other savings) and family support, either prior to or in concert with any assistance from the Fund.
- 1.3. Students receiving support are expected to show good Christian stewardship of the funds provided to them, and organize their lifestyle and purchase choices accordingly. Additional expenses beyond submitted budget requests should be properly accounted for by way of receipts.
- 1.4. Financial aid will be administered in such a way as to affirm financial responsibility and integrity of both students and fund administration.
- 1.5. The administration of financial aid shall be individual, personal, pastoral, and confidential.
- 1.6. Applicants may request assistance on an annual basis. All requests must reflect all costs associated with realistic and anticipated living expenses. Students are encouraged to submit their

Committee for Needy Students' Fund Report – General Synod Edmonton 2019

October 13, 2018

budget application by September 1<sup>st</sup> to assist the committee with setting assessments for the next calendar year.

## Section 2 Application Process

2.1. A student must apply to the Committee substantiating their request for support. The submission shall include a letter of request, as well as a completed Budget Request form.

2.2. Students are to submit requests by September 1st of the school year, and provide any other information requested by the Committee.

2.3. This document may be reviewed and amended as required upon approval of the Council of the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church of Grassie.

## Section 3 Acknowledgements

To the Applicant:

3.1. I have read and am willing to abide by the Support guidelines for the Needy Students Fund as outlined in this document and adopted by the Council of the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church of Grassie on February 13<sup>th</sup> 2017.

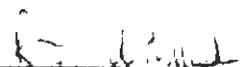
3.2 I declare that the information provided herein and listed on the attached Budget Request Form, accurately describes my financial position.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

NSF Guideline Version Feb 13 2017  
Approval

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of NSF Chairman  
Br. J. Bosscher

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Grassie Council Chairman  
Rev. RJ den Hollander

### Section 3 – 2015-2017 Financial Statements

#### Needy Student Fund Committee Statement of Receipts and Disbursements (CAD)

	<u>Notes</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>
<b>Receipts</b>				
Assessments		36,202	131,242	126,878
Prepaid Assessments				2,130
Refunds to churches for overpayments		-3,085	-911	-260
Bank credit	1		24	
Returns from students	2	2,259		
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>35,376</b>	<b>130,355</b>	<b>128,748</b>
<b>Disbursements/Expenses</b>				
Student support		45,262	53,995	104,640
Bank Charges		15	17	31
Committee administration				
<b>Total Disbursements/Expenses</b>		<b>45,277</b>	<b>54,012</b>	<b>104,671</b>
Surplus / (deficit)		<b>-9,901</b>	<b>76,343</b>	<b>24,077</b>
Assessment per communicant member		3	12	12
No. of students Jan - May		4	5	6
No. of students Sept - Dec		4	2	5

#### Needy Student Fund Committee Statement of Financial Position as at December 31

<b>Assets (CAD)</b>				
Cash		110,626	122,496	40,824
Cash in transit at year end	3			678
Accounts Receivable		1,317	12	20
Advances to Students	4	6,464	4,517	8,556
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>118,407</b>	<b>127,025</b>	<b>50,078</b>
<b>Liabilities and Surplus</b>				
Accounts payable	5	1,887	604	
Assessments received in advance				
Accumulated surplus		116,520	126,421	50,078
<b>Total Liabilities and Accumulated Surplus</b>		<b>118,407</b>	<b>127,025</b>	<b>50,078</b>

#### Notes

- 1 Membership share payout from CU
- 2 Support cheques stale dated or funds returned from students
- 3 Cheques received but not deposited as of year end
- 4 Regular support issued in Dec of current year for Jan of next year
- 5 Overpayments rec'd at year end, rolled into assessment for following year

## Section 4 – Committee for Needy Students' Fund Membership

Since 2015 the CNSF has experienced a turnover of two members due to tenure expiration. Outgoing members br. John Bosscher (chairperson), br. Klass Harink (council liaison) are thanked for their dedication and labor in their respective Committee roles. Brother Wolter Vis has moved from Council liaison to the function of chairperson, while br. William Ravensbergen takes up the Council liaison position and br. Derek Bartels serves as Vice-Chair.

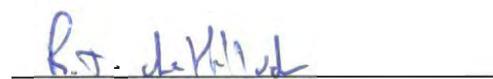
The committee meets monthly or on an *as needed* basis. There is good cooperation and harmony between all members of the CNSF and the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church Council.

2018 Needy Student Fund Committee Membership	
<b>Chairperson</b>	Br. Wolter Vis
<b>Vice Chairperson</b>	Br. Derek Bartels
<b>Secretary</b>	Br. Martin Schulenberg
<b>Treasurer</b>	Br. Ryan Kingma
<b>Council Liaison</b>	Br. William Ravensbergen

For the Committee and Council;

DATE: Oct 19 / 2018

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Br. Wolter Vis  
 Chairperson CNSF

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Rev. RJ den Hollander  
 Council Chair – Covenant Canadian Reformed Church

**Needy Student Fund Committee  
Statement of Receipts and Disbursements (CAD)**

	<u>Notes</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>
<b>Receipts</b>				
Assessments		36,202	131,242	126,878
Prepaid Assessments				2,130
Refunds to churches for overpayments		-3,085	-911	-260
Bank credit	1		24	
Returns from students	2	2,259		
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b><u>35,376</u></b>	<b><u>130,355</u></b>	<b><u>128,748</u></b>
<b>Disbursements/Expenses</b>				
Student support		45,262	53,995	104,640
Bank Charges		15	17	31
Committee administration				
<b>Total Disbursements/Expenses</b>		<b><u>45,277</u></b>	<b><u>54,012</u></b>	<b><u>104,671</u></b>
Surplus / (deficit)		<b><u>-9,901</u></b>	<b><u>76,343</u></b>	<b><u>24,077</u></b>
Assessment per communicant member		3	12	12
No. of students Jan - May		4	5	6
No. of students Sept - Dec		4	2	5

**Needy Student Fund Committee  
Statement of Financial Position as at December 31**

<b>Assets (CAD)</b>				
Cash		110,626	122,496	40,824
Cash in transit at year end	3			678
Accounts receivable		1,317	12	20
Advances to Students	4	6,464	4,517	8,556
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b><u>118,407</u></b>	<b><u>127,025</u></b>	<b><u>50,078</u></b>
<b>Liabilities and Surplus</b>				
Accounts payable	5	1,887	604	
Assessments received in advance				
Accumulated surplus		116,520	126,421	50,078
<b>Total Liabilities and Accumulated Surplus</b>		<b><u>118,407</u></b>	<b><u>127,025</u></b>	<b><u>50,078</u></b>

Notes

- 1 Membership share payout from CU
- 2 Support cheques stale dated or funds returned from students
- 3 Cheques received but not deposited as of year end
- 4 Regular support issued in Dec of current year for Jan of next year
- 5 Overpayments rec'd at year end, rolled into assessment for following year

### 8.3 Letters from the Churches Regarding the Reports

## 8.4 Overtures

#### 8.4.1 Overtures from Regional Synod West dated November 5

***Excerpt from the***  
**Acts of Regional Synod West**  
**convened November 2018 by the Coaldale CanRC**  
at the Abbotsford CanRC

**ARTICLE 19 [6A]: OVERTURES TRINITY PSALTER-HYMNAL**

**1. Material**

- 1.1. Overture from Classis Pacific East (CPE) (Appendix A)
- 1.2. Overture from Classis Manitoba (Appendix B)
- 1.3. Letter re overture CPE from Nooksack Valley American Reformed Church
- 1.4. Letter re overture CPE from Chilliwack Canadian Reformed Church
- 1.5. Letter re overture CPE from Lynden American Reformed Church

**2. Actions & Considerations**

- 2.1 Regional Synod West (RSW) adopted and modified the overtures and interacted with the other materials in the following manner to give direction on this topic:
  - 2.1.1. Those letters which were submitted as appeals were received as letters of the churches interacting with the overtures.
  - 2.1.2. The overtures demonstrate a commonality in speaking about the Trinity Psalter-Hymnal (TPH) and its merits in addition to the Book of Praise (BoP).
  - 2.1.3. The purpose is not to replace the BoP but to enhance the unity in worship between us as sister churches in North America by allowing the churches to also sing from the TPH.
  - 2.1.4. The language of the overtures and the other materials received by RSW demonstrates that this is a topic that lives in our churches. In addition, the material shows that some of the arguments either supporting or opposing these overtures are subjective.
  - 2.1.5. There is great value in maintaining the principle of a federative approach to corporate worship. While not wanting to make exceptions the rule, RSW acknowledges the uniqueness of certain congregations in their circumstances.
  - 2.1.6. The SCBP's (Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise) evaluation process of suggestions for new hymns from the churches is perceived as not sufficiently responsive to what the churches through decisions of general synods have requested. It is debatable whether the SCBP is the appropriate forum to evaluate the TPH.
  - 2.1.7. In order to have the churches appreciate the quality of the TPH, the churches should have ample opportunity to interact meaningfully with its contents, as has happened in the past with the introduction of the Augment.

**3. Recommendation**

That Regional Synod West (RSW) decide:

- 3.1. To overture GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel) to approve, in addition to the adopted Book of Praise, the Psalms and Hymns of the Trinity Psalter-Hymnal for use in public worship as per CO article 55
- 3.2. To submit the texts of both overture and all letters received by RSW to GS 2019 for its consideration
- 3.3. To submit matters mentioned under 2 above to GS 2019 for due consideration.

**ADOPTED**

Execution: This decision will be passed on as an overture to GS 2019 and to all the churches as per Synod

Guidelines I.F; the submission to the churches will be just the overtures, the submission to GS 2019 will include all the material submitted to RSW 2018 on these overtures.

## **ARTICLE 20 [6B]: OVERTURE IMPLEMENTATION OF CO ARTICLE 21**

### **1. Material**

1.1. Overture from Classis Pacific West (Appendix C)

### **2. Considerations**

- 2.1. The overture is well researched and well put together.
- 2.2. Currently students of theology may seek permission to speak an edifying word upon completion of their third year of studies at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) and be eligible for the Pastoral Training Program upon completion of their third year. Adoption of this overture will mean that students in theology can seek permission to speak an edifying word at the end of their second year of studies at CRTS and be eligible for the Pastoral Training Program upon completion of their second year.
- 2.3. Re recommendation 3.b.iii (3.1.2.3 below): The internship may be a way for the student to ascertain whether or not he is suited to the work. Thus, it may be advisable to drop this condition.
- 2.4. Re 3.b.viii (3.1.2.8 below): The workload for the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS may become too large if he is to approve sermons of not just fourth year students but also third year students. General synod should consider expanding this recommendation to read: "... that new practice sermons made outside of the internship periods and before a student graduates from CRTS be subject to approval by the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS, or by a minister recommended by the Senate and appointed by the Board of Governors."
- 2.5. It is more proper for general synod than a regional synod to consider amendments to this overture.

### **3. Recommendation**

That Regional Synod West (RSW) decide

3.1. To overture General Synod 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel):

- 3.1.1 That as part of the "general ecclesiastical regulations" of article 21 of the Church Order, the churches grant their students for the ministry the opportunity to come before a classis after they have completed two years of study in the M.Div. degree, in order to seek permission to speak an edifying word;
- 3.1.2. That this permission or licensure be granted under the following conditions:
  - 3.1.2.1. That the student present a letter to classis from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) that he has successfully completed two years of studies in an approved M.Div. program;
  - 3.1.2.2. That the student sustain an appropriate ecclesiastical exam and supply whatever documents the classis may require;
  - 3.1.2.3. That the student desire to enter gospel ministry, if called to such by the churches;
  - 3.1.2.4. That in the summer immediately following classical permission or licensure— whether this be after either the student's second or third year of studies—the student must follow a summer internship during which he will work under a particular minister or ministers who will serve as his mentor or mentors and will approve his practice sermons prior to delivery (i.e., the licensure is initially not to be regarded as a broad permission to access all pulpits or to provide pulpit supply to vacant churches, but first of all to undergo practical training);

- 3.1.2.5. That the mentor write a report for the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS regarding the student's progress and his suitability for ministry, while the elders, as well as any minister or seminary professors present for the student's practice preaching, submit evaluations of the student's preaching and leading of the worship services to the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS;
- 3.1.2.6. That the license to speak an edifying word be valid for 12 months, with the possibility of one or two 12-month renewals, if a written request is made by the student to the same classis which granted him licensure, before the 12-month period elapses;
- 3.1.2.7. That during the academic year that follows a summer internship, CRTS students who have received permission to speak an edifying word be expected to discuss with their mentors on the CRTS faculty whether and how much to honour requests from the churches to lead the worship services and speak an edifying word (so that their mentor at CRTS may assist them with advice towards maintaining school and family obligations);
- 3.1.2.8. That all other regulations remain in place, such as that new practice sermons made outside of the internship periods and before a student graduates from CRTS be subject to approval by the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS;
- 3.1.3. That General Synod mandate the Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding:
  - 3.1.3.1. To continue with its present mandate by funding one full-summer internship for each M.Div. student of CRTS who aspires to ministry in the CanRCs, whether the internship occurs after the second or third year of a student's studies at CRTS;
- 3.2. To submit the full text of the overture and study guide to GS 2019 for its consideration;
- 3.3. To request GS 2019 to consider the following amendments to the overture:
  - 3.3.1 Re 3.1.2.3 above: As the internship may be a way for the student to ascertain whether or not he is suited to the work, this condition should be removed;
  - 3.3.2 Re 3.1.2.8 above: to add "..., or by a minister recommended by the Senate and appointed by the Board of Governors."

**ADOPTED**

Execution: This decision will be passed on as an overture to GS 2019 and to all the churches as per Synod Guidelines I.F.

#### 8.4.1.1 Overture – Trinity Psalter – CPE Aldergrove

## APPENDIX A – OVERTURE CLASSIS PACIFIC EAST – TRINITY PSALTER HYMNAL

### Overture from the Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church regarding the Trinity Psalter Hymnal

We recommend that Synod Edmonton 2019 approve the Psalms and Hymns of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal as adopted by the United Reformed Churches in North American and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for use in public worship as per Article 55 of the Church Order.

#### Grounds:

1. In regard to the Psalm section of our *Book of Praise*:
  - a. There is a measure of discontent in our congregations concerning the *exclusive* use of Genevan melodies in the singing of the Psalms. This discontent is expressed in home visits made by elders, in letters to Council, in discussions during group Bible Study and also in many informal settings. Discontent seems to revolve around the following points:
    - i. While the virtues of our current Psalm tunes are widely appreciated, church members desire a greater variety of musical style.
    - ii. Exclusive use of melodies originating from one short period of church history and from one Reformed community seems inherently parochial; we should aspire to be more catholic in our expressions of praise to the God of the whole world. Singing melodies that are better known in the broader Christian world would help to guard us against unnecessary isolation.
    - iii. Our churches frequently attract guests and new members. We are also increasingly engaged in the work of church planting. Both Christians who are being attracted to the Reformed faith as well as new converts often express difficulty in appreciating and singing the Psalms set to Genevan melodies. If a person has not been raised with these tunes, it can be difficult to learn to sing them let alone truly love them. For this reason, it would be a good thing to use in worship some of the Psalm-settings and melodies which are more broadly familiar in the Christian world.
2. In regard to the Hymn section of our *Book of Praise*:
  - a. Having more common ground with our English-speaking sister churches in regard to hymnology, would serve to express and nurture church unity.
  - b. Having a broader selection of familiar hymns and spiritual songs would benefit us as we seek to be churches in which new Christians and “inquirers” can find a church home.
  - c. As can be seen from various events at which believers from our churches gather, people find joy in singing hymns and spiritual songs which are not currently found in our Book of Praise. This is evident at funeral services, weddings and family gatherings as well as school events. It is not hard to sense a genuine desire in the hearts of many to sing some of these hymns and songs in public worship.
  - d. In the past, various churches in our federation have submitted fairly large selections of hymns for the consideration of the *Standing Committee* for the *Book of Praise* (SCBP). This shows that there is a desire for singing more than the current selection of hymns in our *Book of Praise*.
  - e. Synod Dunnville 2016 renewed the mandate of the SCBP to receive suggestions for more hymns for the hymn section of the Book of Praise (Article 122).
3. In regard to the process of change:
  - a. In the past, changes to the *Book of Praise* happened at a glacial pace. Church members and church councils find the process of seeking change very daunting. In the past, some of our

congregations have sent annotated lists of carefully selected hymns to the SCBP. Not many of these have become part of our current edition of the *Book of Praise*. At times, worthwhile suggestions seemingly get lost at the level of the SCBP. This causes frustration especially when no reasons are offered for not accepting recommendations.

- b. Instead of mandating our SCBP to expand the hymn section of the *Book of Praise*, a process which will undoubtedly take a number of years, we have the option of availing ourselves of the work of our sister churches, the United Reformed Churches of North America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
  - i. In regard to the URCNA, we can point to a strong history of interaction between our respective federations in matters of liturgy. Until recently, our two church federations were working together on a new Psalter. This indicates that the CanRC were open at that time to significant changes to the *Book of Praise*. While our partnership with the URCNA in working to a new song book ultimately stalled (though not because of any reluctance on the part of our churches), the URCNA went on to work with the OPC to produce a new Psalter. This work was recently completed when the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (2017) was approved by the General Assembly of the OPC (2014, 2016) and the Synods of the URCNA (2014, 2016). It is expected that this new Psalter Hymnal will be published in early 2018.
  - ii. We have confidence that our Reformed brothers and sisters in the URCNA and the OPC have worked with good principles in putting together the Trinity Psalter Hymnal. In the process of evaluating and selecting songs for this new project, they were guided by the clear and sound “Principles and Guidelines” adopted by Synod Calgary 2004 of the URCNA (see *Appendix 1*). The songs in the new Trinity Psalter Hymnal have been approved by Synods of the URCNA (2014 and 2016) as well as by the General Assemblies of the OPC (2014, 2016). If we have confidence in our sister churches, such approval should carry much weight for us.
  - iii. The new Trinity Psalter Hymnal contains the full text of each Biblical Psalm in at least one primary version; in addition, there are secondary selections of some Psalms that contain a partial Psalm text (see the “URCNA Psalter Hymnal Committee Report of April 2011” meeting available at the following website: <https://www.urchna.org/1651/custom/24189>). The Psalm settings come from a variety of traditions and include some contemporary versions.
- c. Adopting our proposal would not require any change in Article 55 of the *Church Order*. Furthermore, should our proposal be accepted, implementation of this decision would be a matter decided upon by each consistory.

---

Appendix 1 – source:

<https://www.urchna.org/urchna/SongbookPublic/PHC%20Report%20to%20Synod%202010.pdf>

**PRINCIPLES & GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING MUSIC IN THE CHURCH (Article 96.1):**

**PRINCIPLES:**

The song of the church is to be suitable for the church’s worship to the glory of God!

*1. The songs of the Church are to be Scriptural*

In content, form, and spirit the Church’s songs must express the truth of the Holy Scriptures. Augustine, referring to the singing of Psalms, said, “No one can sing anything worthy of God which he

has not received from Him. . . then we are assured that God puts the words in our mouth.”

## 2. *The songs of the Church are to be a sacrifice of praise*

Singing is an important element of the congregation’s response to God’s redeeming work in Christ Jesus and the Word proclaimed in the worship service.

John Calvin wrote, “Singing has great strength and power to move and to set on fire the hearts of men that they may call upon God and praise Him with a more vehement and more ardent zeal. This singing should not be light or frivolous, but it ought to have weight and majesty.”

## 3. *The songs of the Church are to be aesthetically pleasing*

The songs for worship are to be a beautiful blend of God-honoring poetry and music.

About such beauty, Abraham Kuyper remarks: "The world of sounds, the world of forms, the world of tints, and the world of poetic ideas, can have no other source than God; and it is our privilege as bearers of His image, to have a perception of their beautiful world, artistically to reproduce, and humanly to enjoy it."

### **GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING SONGS:**

1. The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical. They are to represent the full range of the revelation of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. The Book of Psalms is foundational for the Church’s songs. Therefore, all of these Psalms, in their entirety, ought to be included in the Church’s songbook.
3. When Psalms or other portions of Scripture are set to music, the words must be faithful to the content and form of the inspired text.
4. In the case of songs other than the versification of Scripture, the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions.
5. The songs of the Church must be intelligible and edifying to the body of Christ.
6. The songs of the Church must reflect and preserve the language of the Church of all ages rather than accommodating current secular trends.
7. In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from artificiality, sentimentality, and individualism.
8. The music of the song should suit the text.
9. The music of the Church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Use is to be made of the music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage.
10. The music of the Church should not be borrowed from music that suggests places and occasions other than the Church and the worship of God.
11. The melodies and harmonies of church music must be suitable for congregational singing, avoiding complicated rhythms, excessive syncopation, and a wide range of pitch.

*End of Classis Pacific East Overture*

#### 8.4.1.2 Overture – Trinity Psalter – CM Denver

**APPENDIX B: OVERTURE CLASSIS MANITOBA - TRINITY PSALTER HYMNAL**

**Re: Proposal from Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver, Colorado to approve the use of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal in public worship**

Dear brothers,

At the Classis Manitoba convened September 28, 2018, the Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver, CO submitted a proposal to be forwarded to Regional Synod West, scheduled to convene November 5, 2018, for submission to the agenda of General Synod Edmonton 2019.

The proposal requests that the Psalms and Hymns of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* as adopted by the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church be approved for use in public worship as per Article 55 of the Church Order.

Classis Manitoba approved the church at Denver’s request to forward their proposal on to Regional Synod West for eventual submission to the agenda of General Synod 2019.

We pray for wisdom from the Lord in your assembly.

Yours in Christ,



---

Rev. J. Poppe  
Chairman (at that time)



---

Rev. H.J. Vanderhorst  
Clerk (at that time)

*Continued next page*

## EMMANUEL AMERICAN REFORMED CHURCH

PO Box 597  
Broomfield, CO 80038  
USA

[clerk@EmmanuelARC.org](mailto:clerk@EmmanuelARC.org)

To: Classis Manitoba Sept 2018

To: Convening Church: Grace Canadian Reformed Church Winnipeg, Canada

August 24, 2018

Re: Proposal to add the Trinity Psalter Hymnal for use in public worship.

The Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver (EARC) requests that Classis propose to Regional Synod West 2018 to propose to Synod Edmonton 2019 to approve the Psalms and Hymns of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal (TPH) as adopted by the United Reformed Churches in North America (URC) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) for use in public worship as per Article 55 of the Church Order in addition to the Book of Praise. The purpose of this request is not to replace the Book of Praise but to enhance the unity in worship between our sister churches in North America by allowing the churches to also sing from the TPH.

A few Christian publications have mentioned the significance of the TPH. Establishing the recently published version has been a process of 21 years, initially between the CanRC and the URC, then an effort by the URC alone and ultimately a joint effort of the URC and the OPC. (Christian Renewal, Vol. 36, #14/15, July 2018). During the combined URC General Synod and the OPC General Assembly in June 2018, Dr. Strange of the OPC expressed, with a strong emphasis on Psalm selections, his hope that Trinity Psalter Hymnal might contribute to the recovery of both robust psalmody and hymnody especially in view of hymns seemingly having eclipsed psalms over the past century. (Christian Renewal, Vol. 36, #14/15, July 2018). In 2016, both the URC General Synod and the OPC General Assembly gave overwhelming final approval for the production of the new Psalter/Hymnal (New Horizons, August-September 2018).

We (the EARC) make this request to Classis while concurrently making proposals to the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP) with the consideration that Art 55 of the Church Order has to do with the churches in common and that direct proposals to the SCBP may fail to get the attention of the churches in general.

We make this request to Classis also aware that Classis Pacific West has already adopted a proposal to request RSW to propose to Synod 2019 to approve the new Trinity Psalter Hymnal. Because we are not privy to the reasons and considerations in their proposal to RSW we would like Classis to consider our reasons to make the request of RSW.

The promotion of uniformity and unity among the sister churches of Jesus Christ in North America. The use of the TPH would not only benefit the EARC particularly when we meet with sister churches for public worship on Days of Commemoration (Art 53 of the Church Order) but more broadly in view of the CanRC's close and regular contact with the URC and OPC, using the TPH may enhance uniformity in public worship.

It could facilitate unity between the CanRC and URC in particular and other faithful churches in North America in general, along the lines of Christ's prayer in John 17. As sister churches and as Christians in North America we will need each other more and more in the environment we live in. The EARC in Denver is especially conscious of this need because of our unique history (more than 60% of the congregation do not have a CanRC background) and because of our location (a growing interdependency with the URC and OPC congregations in our area).

The lack of familiar faithful hymns. As mentioned above, the membership of Emmanuel Church is gathered from diverse backgrounds. Those coming from other Christian traditions have had to overcome various challenges in order to join the EARC, but one challenge stands out: that they would seldom sing familiar Christian hymns in public worship and that most congregational singing would take considerable effort for some time. We believe that the use of the TPH would alleviate some of this challenge and provide new opportunities for outreach and evangelism.

The challenge of some of the Genevan tunes. Again, especially noted by those from other Christian musical traditions, even after years of singing from the Book of Praise, some tunes and some note intervals remain difficult. The more demanding the tune, the more one's attention is drawn away from the words. The TPH offers alternative tunes for many of the Psalms.

In light of the fact that our sister churches, the OPC and URC, have published the new Trinity Psalter Hymnal after a rigorous test of the psalms and hymns and music, we request that we apply their work to our benefit. We request that Classis propose to RSW to propose to Synod 2019 to approve the Trinity Psalter Hymnal for use in worship as per Art 55 of the Church Order.

On behalf of the Consistory of the Emmanuel American Reformed Church,



Gerard Hagg  
Chairman



Hendrik Moorlag  
Clerk                      Aug 24, 2018

**End of Classis Manitoba Overture**

### 8.4.1.3 Overture – Implementation of CO 21 – Licensure

## **APPENDIX C: OVERTURE FROM CLASSIS PACIFIC WEST – IMPLEMENTATION OF CO ARTICLE 21 (SPEAKING AN EDIFYING WORD)**

### ***Proposal***<sup>1</sup>

#### **Note**

While “The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches” remains the legal name of the institution involved in this proposal, its operational name became “Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary” per the Acts of Synod 2010, art. 152. Both names will be used in this proposal. Also, the proposal will use the expressions “permission to speak an edifying word” and “licensure” interchangeably.

#### **1. Observations.**

We have observed that:

- a. The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) is the seminary of our federation of churches and exists primarily for the sake of training men to be ministers of the Word in our churches. CRTS teaches all the academic subjects for the Master of Divinity degree that the churches deem necessary for the work of ministry and endeavours to inculcate as many of the practical skills as possible. The M.Div. program at CRTS has been a four-year program since the 1975–1976 academic year.
- b. The churches have agreed in article 21 of the Church Order that, “Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying word, others may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations, for their own training, and in order that they may become known to the congregations.”
- c. The wording of article 21 of the CO makes a distinction between the article itself and some further “general ecclesiastical regulations.”
- d. Very soon after the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches was established (as a three-year program), the churches agreed in Synod New Westminster 1971, art. 76 that, “Students of theology may receive the right to speak an edifying word in the Churches on the following conditions: . . . 2. They shall not do so unless they have completed at least two years of theological studies . . . 4. They shall present a certificate from the Faculty of our Theological College that they have satisfactorily completed at least two years of studies at the College. 5. They shall deliver a sermon at the Classis and shall be interrogated on Reformed doctrine. 6. . . . Permission shall be given for a period not exceeding twelve months, and that under the condition that the student shall submit his sermons to and discuss them with the Lecturer in the Diaconological department at our College.”
- e. At Synod Toronto 1974, art. 171, the churches agreed to extend the course of study at the College to four years instead of three by adding a propaedeutic year, for the sake of lightening the load of learning in the following three years and ensuring a stronger training in the biblical languages. Since then, the “two years” of Synod 1971, art. 76 was

---

<sup>1</sup> This proposal was originally written as if a consistory had endorsed it and was sending it to the churches of its classical region in preparation for a meeting of those churches in Classis. It is meant to assist local churches that may wish to adapt it for submission to their Classis. Other than cosmetic changes, the Willoughby Heights council has left the proposal intact.

- understood (correctly) to require “three years” of study.
- f. The students at CRTS have twice in recent years (2012 and 2016) drawn up proposals for the faculty requesting that a way be made for the students to be able, if they pass the requisite ecclesiastical exams, to speak an edifying word in the churches after two years of CRTS education rather than waiting for three years;
  - g. The faculty of CRTS have studied this question in depth and have concluded that they support granting M.Div. students at CRTS an earlier license to speak an edifying word in the churches, provided certain principles are maintained;
  - h. The United Reformed Church consistories frequently grant licensure to their ministerial students after only one year of seminary. Typically, such students attend seminaries that have a three-year program, but CRTS has now had two students from the URCNA, both of whom were granted licensure by their churches after completing one year at CRTS. CRTS rejoices to be of service to the URCNA, but the faculty have also noted the disparity that this earlier licensure creates between CanRC and URC students. The faculty members also have not noticed any detrimental effect on the URC students; just the opposite, their added experience in preaching deepened and widened their exegetical skills, improved their preaching, and sharpened their contributions to class discussions about the practical aspects of ministry. CRTS faculty members have consistently observed the same improvements for most CanRC students after their full-summer internships between the third and fourth years of seminary.
  - i. Reformed churches in the past have taken a variety of approaches to practice preaching by theological students. In particular, the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century and following allowed their theological students to deliver practice sermons (*proponeren*) in the worship services, provided they had sustained the requisite ecclesiastical exam.
  - j. The Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) of 2010 was “provisionally adopted” by Synod 2010 as the Church Order of a united federation of the CanRC and URCNA, should such a federation be formed (*Acts of General Synod of the CanRC 2010*, art. 151). Synod 2010 received letters of concern from the churches about article 4 of the PJCO, which would permit licensure after only one year of seminary studies. The synod, in its considerations, stated that the Church Order Subcommittee “should give serious consideration to raising the minimum requirement to two years before granting licensure to exhort” (art. 151, 3.3).
  - k. In the Freshman Year at CRTS, students receive a homiletics course which takes them through all the steps from Scripture text to sermon. They deliver their first sermon at the end of the course in the presence of their fellow freshmen. These students also attend the Sermon Session class every week for two hours. After their first year is completed they undergo an internship orientation of two weeks in which their minister-mentor requires them to write two sermon outlines and sometimes asks them to write them out fully as sermons. In their second year at CRTS students enter the three-year rotation of curriculum. They write and deliver three sermons in the Sermon Session class. Thus, by the end of their second year at CRTS they will have written at least four sermons and possibly as many as six. They will also have observed the professors give feedback on dozens of sermons prepared by their more senior fellow students. Further, the Senate of CRTS decided on 20 June 2017 that from now on the January Interim Semester will include a sermon-making workshop every year. This will increase student exposure to sermon preparation.
  - l. Since the second course in homiletics at CRTS occurs once every three years, the likelihood

that a student at CRTS has taken this course increases by 33% per year in each of the last three years of training. Thus, they are *likelier* to have taken this course after three years of seminary training (the current time when licensure may be sought) than after two years, but in neither case is it certain that they will have taken this course.

- m. In the Freshman Year at CRTS, M.Div. students memorize all of the Heidelberg Catechism as well as outlines of all the contents of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort. They also receive lectures on the history and contents of these Reformed symbols. In addition, they are introduced to Old Testament exegesis and Reformed hermeneutics. In their second year of studies, students will cover two of the six *loci* of dogmatics in depth, and will take one or more courses in scriptural exegesis.
- n. The church of Guelph-Emmanuel has been mandated by General Synod to administer a fund for the Pastoral Training Program. The Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CPTPF) supports churches that receive student interns for up to 12 weeks of funding. They determine the maximum number of weeks of support based upon the Pastoral Training Program's requirement that the student follow an internship for at least 10 weeks, and up to 12.

## **2. Considerations.**

We have considered that:

- a. CRTS should, as much as possible, prepare the students in the M.Div. program for the full range of ministerial duties, including training in the practical skills that belong to the ministry of the Word. In all vocations/professions, some practical things can only be learned on the job. This is true of the ministry as well, yet the more preparation one has prior to being ordained, the better. Rates of training vary, and for many men one year of practice preaching and one summer internship is a rather limited time to acquire the practical skills involved in preaching and pastoral ministry. More opportunities for such training will also give more time for mentoring and guidance. This extra time would be helpful for the students and, in turn, for the churches that they will serve, Lord willing.
- b. The matter of whether students may speak an edifying word is a matter of the churches in common, because it is governed by the Church Order.
  - i. The churches decided in favour of this practice as soon as possible after the formation of our seminary. A proposal to eliminate permission for students to speak an edifying word was received by Synod Toronto 1974, art. 30, and rejected. As far as we know, no synod has ever had to deal with objections to the practice since that time.
  - ii. In the last two decades, CRTS has uniformly heard positive feedback from the churches, ministers, and students about the opportunity to speak an edifying word.
  - iii. Given the two purposes mentioned in article 21 of the CO for students of theology speaking an edifying word, it would not normally be suitable to have students provide pulpit supply to vacant congregations. At least, the student needs an active mentor to guide him.
- c. Article 21 of the Church Order shows that the churches did not see fit to stipulate in the Church Order itself the timing of granting a license to speak an edifying word, but rather spoke of "general ecclesiastical regulations." Ecclesiastical regulations are more easily subject to change than the Church Order itself; for example, a Classis or Synod is free to change its own regulations, as is a local church free to change its "adopted regulations" for electing office

bearers, which are mentioned in the CO, art. 3.

- d. The decision of Synod New Westminster 1971 to permit the speaking of an edifying word only after a student has completed two full years of theological training ought to be regarded as a “general ecclesiastical regulation” which the churches may change if good grounds for the change can be provided. Yet, because this regulation was put in place by a general synod, changing it should only occur when all the churches meet together—via those who are delegated—in a general synod. Synod 1971 did not provide reasons why two years of study were needed rather than one, so a proposal for changing these regulations does not need to address any material from Synod 1971 on this point.
- e. When in 1974 the churches extended the course of study at their Theological College, they did not make any further decisions as to how this might affect the timing for speaking an edifying word. However, the wording of the decision made it clear that the added year was propaedeutic to the rest, and thus the conclusion that the students were to wait until after three years of study rather than two was a correct conclusion. Synod 1974’s concern was that students receive a better grounding in the languages of Holy Scripture and that their study load for the following three years would be lightened. These concerns do not directly pertain to whether students should have two or three years of training in the M.Div. program before practice preaching. Also, the curriculum at CRTS has undergone development towards an earlier preparation for preaching. It seems, then, that there are no reasons from the decision in 1974 which would impede a proposal for an earlier licensure.
- f. It is clear that many of the M.Div. students at CRTS have desired the opportunity to grow in their sermon preparation skills by preparing more sermons under the guidance of their professors and mentor-ministers. But there is no further room in the curriculum of CRTS to effect this; therefore, the summer months when students typically work in other vocations would be suitable to learn more about sermon preparation, through practice.
- g. It is helpful to know that those who train our students for the ministry support an earlier licensure, anticipating that it will enhance the academic and practical training given at CRTS (indeed, the present proposal began life as part of a Strategic Planning Initiative of the Board of Governors and faculty of CRTS).
- h. Earlier licensure appears to have been a benefit for the URC students at CRTS and can be expected to benefit the CanRC students as well.
- i. While the churches are not bound to any particular past practices, it is important that the churches together regulate admission to the pulpit and maintain a suitable ecclesiastical procedure for granting permission to speak an edifying word. Regulating such practices falls within the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical classes, not the seminary.
- j. The willingness of the churches to consider granting licensure after the second year of studies at CRTS was present at Synod 2010, apart from a proposal that focused on this point. This suggests that the churches would be willing to support a worked-out proposal for earlier licensure.
- k. Students at CRTS receive sufficient training in sermon writing to be able to work under a mentor in one of the churches after two years of seminary studies (provided they sustain the requisite ecclesiastical exam). Whereas the first year of training alone should not be considered sufficient for a full-summer internship, two years of training appears to be sufficient.
- l. Since in the present structure, wherein licensure may only be granted after three years of theological study, students at CRTS have not necessarily received their second course in

homiletics by the time they may seek permission to speak an edifying word, the absence or presence of this course is not pertinent to whether permission is granted after their second or third year.

- m. Students at CRTS should be considered, after two years of study, to have taken enough coursework in both the exegesis of Holy Scripture and the doctrines of the church to be able to work fruitfully under a mentor for a summer internship (it is understood that such readiness will vary by student, that CRTS faculty will make recommendations to each student as appropriate, and that Classis will judge the student's readiness at the examination to speak an edifying word).
- n. Students who receive permission to speak an edifying word should follow a full-summer internship in the summer immediately following their exam at Classis (whether after second or third year). The seminary program, however, requires and arranges only one summer internship and the CPTPF funds just one internship. This requirement, arrangement, and funding should remain as they are. If students who have already interned after their second year wish to pursue an additional summer internship after their third year, financing should not be arranged via the CPTPF, but by the church or churches involved, who will liaise directly with the student. We envision two main options below, (i) or (ii), with various possibilities emerging under (iii) as to the circumstances under which *additional* internships might be arranged (the list of possibilities is neither exhaustive nor normative, only suggestive):
  - i. Full summer internship after 2<sup>nd</sup> year, with church assisted by CPTPF. Two- to three-week mission internship after 3<sup>rd</sup> year (these are not funded by the church federation). Additional, optional internship opportunities arranged by local churches and the student.
  - ii. Two- to three-week mission internship after 2<sup>nd</sup> year, without licensure (these are not funded by the church federation). Full summer internship after 3<sup>rd</sup> year, with church assisted by CPTPF. If desirable, additional internship opportunities may be arranged by local churches and the student after the 4<sup>th</sup> year.
  - iii. *Additional* internships, beyond what is required by the CRTS program, do not need to be quite as closely overseen by a local minister-mentor and thus might involve pulpit supply for vacant churches, churches whose minister is on sabbatical, churches simply needing extra help, two or three churches working together and each benefiting from the student's practice preaching, or even assistance in one or another mission, evangelism, or church planting projects. In any case, the student's sermons would still need approval prior to preaching. We envision that the benefits will be mutual—the student will grow in ability while the churches or mission works will be assisted. As noted, this list of possibilities is neither exhaustive nor normative, only suggestive.

*We consider it most proper for the broadest of our assemblies, the general synod, which options and variants might be best, and thus, as consistory with deacons, are not advising a particular choice.*<sup>2</sup>

### **3. Recommendations:**

We recommend:

- a. That as part of the “general ecclesiastical regulations” of article 21 of the Church Order, the

---

<sup>2</sup> Italics added by the Willoughby Heights CanRC.

churches grant their students for the ministry the opportunity to come before a classis after they have completed two years of study in the M.Div. degree, in order to seek permission to speak an edifying word.

- b. That this permission or licensure be granted under the following conditions:
  - i. That the student present a letter to classis from CRTS that he has successfully completed two years of studies in an approved M.Div. program;
  - ii. That the student sustain an appropriate ecclesiastical exam and supply whatever documents the classis may require;
  - iii. That the student desire to enter gospel ministry, if called to such by the churches.
  - iv. That in the summer immediately following classical permission or licensure—whether this be after either the student’s second or third year of studies—the student must follow a summer internship during which he will work under a particular minister or ministers who will serve as his mentor or mentors and will approve his practice sermons prior to delivery (i.e., the licensure is initially not to be regarded as a broad permission to access all pulpits or to provide pulpit supply to vacant churches, but first of all to undergo practical training);
  - v. That the mentor write a report for the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS regarding the student’s progress and his suitability for ministry, while the elders, as well as any minister or seminary professors present for the student’s practice preaching, submit evaluations of the student’s preaching and leading of the worship services to the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS;
  - vi. That the license to speak an edifying word be valid for 12 months, with the possibility of one or two 12-month renewals, if a written request is made by the student to the same classis which granted him licensure, before the 12-month period elapses;
  - vii. That during the academic year that follows a summer internship, CRTS students who have received permission to speak an edifying word be expected to discuss with their mentors on the CRTS faculty whether and how much to honour requests from the churches to lead the worship services and speak an edifying word (so that their mentor at CRTS may assist them with advice towards maintaining school and family obligations).
  - viii. That all other regulations remain in place, such as that new practice sermons made outside of the internship periods and before a student graduates from CRTS be subject to approval by the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS.
- c. That Classis Pacific West request Regional Synod West to review this proposal, endorse it, and then put it on the agenda of General Synod Edmonton-Immanuel 2019 for consideration by all the churches.
- d. That General Synod mandate the CTPF:
  - i. to continue with its present mandate by funding one full-summer internship for each M.Div. student of CRTS who aspires to ministry in the CanRCs, whether the internship occurs after the second or third year of a student’s studies at CRTS.

## ***Study material***

# **Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary Strategic Planning Initiative # 5: Possible Earlier Licensure**

30 June 2017

Report by Dr. Van Raalte

## **1. Introduction**

On September 4, 2014, CRTS held a strategic planning exercise. I was given the mandate to spearhead a 3- to 5-year priority (number five), namely, to “investigate second-year preaching consent and other internship opportunities for students and have recommendations on how to implement.”

On August 21, 2015 I supplied an interim report to the Board of Governors, stating that the issue had arisen in part for two reasons: first, because CRTS now has students from the URCNA, and they are permitted to seek a full-summer preaching internship after only one year of study at CRTS whereas our CanRC students must wait until after their third year; second, our students (hereafter assume that I mean CanRC students, unless otherwise specified) attend CRTS only eight of the twelve months each year and the first- and second-year students then spend four months in work not related to their vocational goals. Could this be improved with a view to eventual ministry?

My report also noted that a proposal to change our current practice would probably have to come before a general synod and might well have to arrive there via a local church writing a proposal for the churches in its classis, and then the classis submitting the matter to a regional synod, and the latter finally sending it to a general synod. This is because the decision to wait until after third year is based on a decision of General Synod New Westminster 1971 and thus belongs to the churches in common and ought only to be altered by a subsequent General Synod. In summer 2015, the deadline for submissions to Synod 2016 was too close to do justice to the issue, and so if any changes were to be proposed, a study of the matter with a view to Synod 2019 was more realistic.

In response, the Board

expressed appreciation for the work done so far and asks Dr. Van Raalte to study this further with the input of the Senate, including looking at internship opportunities besides preaching, financial implications for the churches, stress and workload on the students. Action: Dr. Van Raalte to develop this further with input from the Senate.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Board’s request from 2015 and the original initiative speak of other internship opportunities, I will focus most of my energies on the question of earlier licensure. The term we use in our CanRC Church Order (CO), art. 21, is “speak an edifying word.” Many churches today speak of “licensure.” Another term, translated directly out of the Dutch, is “preaching consent.”<sup>4</sup> When I use the term “licensure” I ask the reader to understand this to be a shortened reference to receiving a “license” to “speak an edifying word” in the worship services of the CanRCs. A man could receive this license according to either article 8 or 21 of the CanRC CO.

---

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting, held 10 September 2015, 9.n (p. 4).

<sup>4</sup> The Dutch terms are “preekconsent,” “een stichtelijk woord spreken” and “spreekconsent.”

I can think of four possible outcomes of this study: recommend no changes; recommend ending licensure altogether (but no one is requesting this); recommend a new blanket regulation for earlier licensure; recommend a new, more flexible, and more individualized approach for possible earlier licensure. The most intriguing possibility seems to me to be a combination of the third the fourth options.

**This report will next outline the history of our own CanRC practice (section 2), then summarize some earlier history in the Reformed churches regarding licensure (section 3), follow this with a description of the practices of other Reformed and Presbyterian churches today (section 4), and finish with considerations regarding our own situation (section 5). The final proposal that flows out of this study is contained in a separate file. If anyone is interested in more historical detail that expands on section 3 below, a separate study on this may be obtained from Dr. Van Raalte, professor of ecclesiology at CRTS.**

## **2. Canadian Reformed History and Facts at Present**

Our present CanRC practice stems from a decision of General Synod New Westminster 1971. It came about as follows: the first synod appointed deputies to study the training for the ministry;<sup>5</sup> the second accepted their recommendation to investigate implementing theological training in Canada by the churches, and adopted regulations for the preparatory and peremptory exams;<sup>6</sup> the third decided on a preliminary plan to have governors oversee a program whereby students for the ministry would be trained by accompanying the existing ministers in turn;<sup>7</sup> the fourth then authorized these governors to purchase a suitable property and mandated others to establish a fund for the financial support of students;<sup>8</sup> the fifth, in 1968, appointed three full-time professors and two lecturers.<sup>9</sup> Training via the churches' own dedicated institution began shortly thereafter. The degree offered was a Bachelor of Divinity and the curriculum "required full-time attendance at the College for a period of three years."<sup>10</sup>

Evidently, once the churches had the academic training in place, they immediately considered that practical exposure to real ministry situations, such as speaking in the actual Sunday worship services, would help prepare the students for their desired task. This gave rise to a proposal about student licensure: Synod 1971 received an overture from Burlington-East which had been adopted by Classis Ontario North and passed on to the Regional Synod of Ontario.<sup>11</sup> As a result, the synod decided that,

Students of theology may receive the right to speak an edifying word in the Churches on the following conditions: . . . 2. They shall not do so unless they have completed at least two years of theological studies . . . 4. They shall present a certificate from the Faculty of our Theological College that they have satisfactorily completed at least two years of studies at the College. 5. They shall deliver a sermon at the Classis and shall be interrogated on Reformed doctrine. 6. . . . Permission shall be given for a period not exceeding twelve months, and that under the condition that the student shall submit his sermons to and discuss them with the Lecturer in the Diaconological department at our College.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Acts of Synod 1954, art. 80.

<sup>6</sup> Acts of Synod 1958, art. 74, 75, 151, 188.

<sup>7</sup> Acts of Synod 1962, art. 95.

<sup>8</sup> Acts of Synod 1965, art. 147, 199.

<sup>9</sup> Acts of Synod 1968, art. 172.

<sup>10</sup> See the "Constitution of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches," art. XIX.1, as found in the Acts of Synod 1971, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup> The acts of Synod 1971 do not mention whether or not the Regional Synod of Ontario had endorsed the overture, but I would assume that it had.

<sup>12</sup> Acts of Synod 1971, art. 76.

Starting in 1971, the churches thus established a limited licensure, with safeguards in place.

However, not everything about the training was deemed adequate. Already in 1971 the professors were concerned that students were being overworked and by 1974 they also realized that many were not adequately prepared for studies at the new theological college.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the Board of Governors, in full agreement with the faculty, proposed to Synod to extend the course of study at the College to four years instead of three, effective at the beginning of the 1975/1976 academic year. Their proposal relied on these grounds:

The reason for this proposal is the necessity to secure a thorough knowledge of the languages of Holy Writ as a necessary condition for further study, which cannot be provided under the present set-up. A course of four years will render it possible to weave this study into the pattern of lectures and exams and to teach during the first of the four years some other subjects which now are taught during the three years of the present set-up and are more of an introductory nature. Thereby the burden during the last three years would be lightened for the students.<sup>14</sup>

The Synod agreed to this proposal and its grounds, particularly the value of securing a more thorough knowledge of the original languages of Scripture as something necessary to further study, and “to have other propaedeutic disciplines in the fifth [*sic.* read “first”] year.”<sup>15</sup> Evidently, although the original synod decision of 1971 required just “two years of theological studies,” prior to licensure, the change to the curriculum that followed Synod 1974 added a *prior*, propaedeutic year, not a subsequent year. Thus, if one includes the propaedeutic year of the current four-year program in the tally of years, students now cannot seek permission to speak an edifying word until after their third year of studies. This is how we have arrived at the current situation, as it stands in 2017.

Another matter came before Synod 1974, namely, a proposal by one of the churches to nix the permission to speak an edifying word in the worship services, and restrict practice preaching to the student’s opportunities within the seminary. The proposal did not formulate its grounds very well, and the synod did not grant the church’s request.<sup>16</sup> The lecturer in diaconiology at the time, Rev. G. Van Dooren, had written a rebuttal of this proposal which was published in *Clarion*. First, he argued for the importance of the practical aspects of “training for the ministry,” suggesting that the very word “training” highlights the practical. He also pointed out the value of having elders in the churches hear these student sermons and offer feedback, even adding that this task of judging the preaching is in fact their duty and calling.<sup>17</sup> To back up the latter argument, he noted that Classis Ontario-North had in its local context added a sixth condition to Synod 1971’s five safeguards for this permission, namely, “The consistories who have invited and heard the student, are requested to send a report of their findings and judgments to the lecturer in homiletics (it stands to reason that these reports will be taken very seriously because the elders are the God-given

---

<sup>13</sup> The reflections found in the 1971 *Yearbook of the Canadian Reformed Churches*, p. 42, state, “As to the Theological College . . . the workload was heavy this first year, and the number of courses actually too large.”

<sup>14</sup> Acts of Synod 1974, art. 171.

<sup>15</sup> Acts of Synod 1974, art. 171.

<sup>16</sup> Acts of Synod 1974, art. 30.

<sup>17</sup> On this point one might refer to the Form of the Ordination of the Elders, which states, “They are also charged with the supervision over the doctrine and conduct of these fellow servants [the ministers]. They shall permit no strange teaching, so that in every respect the congregation is edified by the pure doctrine of the gospel.” By extension, if the elders have this duty toward the ministers, why not also towards those who aspire to the ministry, with a view to helping train them for eventual service in the Word? See *Book of Praise* (2014 edition), p. 625.

brethren to supervise the preaching).”<sup>18</sup>

Today the United Reformed Churches strongly emphasize the role of the elders of the local church in relation to their theological students and the opening and overseeing of the pulpit.<sup>19</sup> In the decision of Classis Ontario-North just cited we find a similar sentiment among our own churches, one that we do well to maintain.

#### *Articles 8 and 21 of the CanRC Church Order*

Two articles of the CanRC CO envision a license or permission to speak an edifying word. In article 8 we agree that “persons who have not pursued the regular course of study” but who have been blessed with exceptional spiritual gifts can be examined by a classis in a preparatory exam which classis may then “allow them to speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis.” This article has a long history in the Reformed churches of the Netherlands; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it served as the avenue to ministry for a high percentage of the ministers, sometimes as many as half (!).<sup>20</sup> I investigate this below.

The CanRC CO added a new article in 1983, article 21.<sup>21</sup> Our version of the CO of Dort—though not necessarily the practice we permit therein—is unique in this regard. The article states, “Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying word, others may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations, for their own training, and in order that they may become known to the congregations.”

Although practices in Reformed churches of the past centuries often cited the high number of ministerial vacancies as grounds to permit non-ordained students of theology to give sermons in the public worship services, article 21 of our CO identifies just two reasons: for the sake of their own training and for the sake of becoming known to the churches.<sup>22</sup> Both of these reasons, particularly the first, could validly function as grounds for the churches to allow their students an earlier license to speak an edifying word.

Although our article 21 is somewhat unique, the practice of having students for the Reformed ministry give practice sermons has been common, yet one ought to distinguish between practice sermons delivered within the worship services from those delivered outside of them. The following section examines this history (pp. 5–8; more information is contained in an appendix). The historical material should not form an essential ground for whatever may be proposed herein—surely scriptural principles and various considerations of necessity and benefit should guide us first—but it does help us find our place in relation to the Reformed churches of the past. Moreover, these churches were seeking to be guided by scriptural

---

<sup>18</sup> G. Van Dooren, “No Place in the Public Worship for an ‘Edifying Word’ and ‘Training?’” in *Clarion* 23:21 (Oct 18, 1974), pp. 12–13.

<sup>19</sup> See the URCNA Church Order (2016), art. 3–5 and appendix 1–4. Available online at [https://www.urna.org/1651/file\\_retrieve/23868](https://www.urna.org/1651/file_retrieve/23868). Accessed 27 June 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Fred van Lieburg has developed a database of the 2,667 Reformed preachers who were admitted to the ministry in the Netherlands between 1572 and 1620, and he writes, “I guess that more than half of pastors who entered the ministry prior to 1620, must have come from a pool of capable Reformed laymen.” Fred van Lieburg, “Dutch Reformed Ministers without Academic Education,” in *The Pastor Bonus* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 171.

<sup>21</sup> Compare *Acts of Synod 1965*, pp. 99–107 and *Acts of Synod 1968*, pp. 118–127 with *Acts of Synod 1983*, pp. 280–90.

<sup>22</sup> For examples where the need of the churches functioned as a ground, see Didier Poton, “De l’élection des proposants en Cévennes au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Études théologiques et religieuses* 60:2 (1984), p. 180; H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, vol. 1, p. 514; Karlo Janssen, “Speaking an edifying word,” *Clarion* 46:7 (April 4, 1997), p. 146. This ground, however, did not mean that Reformed churches easily accepted anyone who desired to enter the ministry. See, for example, Ingrid Dobbe, “Requirements for Dutch Reformed Ministers, 1570–1620,” in *The Pastor Bonus* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 191–92. For an example of the same reasoning today, see *Acts of Synod 2016, FRCNA*, p. 105.

principles, and we ought to work with the same.

### **3. History of Practice Preaching in Select Reformed Churches**

In what follows, I have inserted a few pages from the historical study that is appended to this proposal.

Our conclusion regarding the practices of the French Reformed Churches—and for the most part, of the Reformed Churches in the Swiss territories as well—must be that their high regard for the office of minister of the Word and for the preaching that he did as one given this office from God, prevented them from permitting any preaching in the regular worship services by non-ordained men. At the same time, they paid close attention to the homiletical training of their students for the ministry, maintaining a structure for the students to deliver practice sermons in their academies and having the pastors in the larger churches (such as Caën) train students privately in preaching. In recognition of the office God had entrusted to the elders and deacons, they too were encouraged to offer critique of the students' *propositions*. The churches certainly wanted capable and well-trained preachers, and thus instituted patterns that, in their minds, provided the training and upheld the sanctity of the pulpit. Although we have not examined the following matter closely, the persecuted French Reformed Churches of the eighteenth century allowed *proposants* to preach for the congregations, but not to administer the sacraments. This permission seems not so much to have been granted for the purpose of training, but more due to the exigencies of the times, wherein the arrangements for ordination may have been logistically difficult and the number of pastors was few.

One notices a development in the referents for *proponenten* (or: *proposants*). First, with Bullinger's *Lectorium*, these would have been students of theology who were learning how to use all the biblical languages, could preach in German and Latin, and delivered their practice sermons in a semi-public instructional setting. The Reformed Churches of France established the same system, using French and Latin. The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands sought to copy this training system, likewise restricted it to making sermon proposals outside the worship services, and probably would have preferred to hold sermons in both Dutch and Latin. But with influence from the practices of prophesying in the Dutch Stranger Church of London (see below), with a great need for pastors, and with less access to ministerial training before 1575, the Dutch churches opened the way for unlettered men to participate in the *propositiën*.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the tradition—so prevalent in the Netherlands—of the *devotio moderna* lay preachers and their encouragement of lay piety also added to the Dutch churches' acceptance of article 8 pastors.<sup>24</sup>

Before 1575 the Dutch ministerial students would have relied primarily upon Geneva's academy and Heidelberg's university.<sup>25</sup> In connection with this, the allowance of the National Synod of Den Hague in 1586 for practice preaching in the church services—provided the requisite ecclesiastical exam was taken—probably also relates to the rise of the University of Leiden, founded in 1575. The magistrates of Leiden had decided that the university itself could declare the students eligible for call and ordain them (not a wholly unusual practice at the time).<sup>26</sup> They also excluded the pastors and consistories from any role in choosing the professors of theology at the university.<sup>27</sup> In response, the churches wanted to maintain their ecclesiastical jurisdiction and so they asserted their right to examine men, permit them to exhort, and

---

<sup>23</sup> On the influence of the practices of London's Dutch Stranger Church, see: Lieburg, "Dutch Reformed Ministers without Education," p. 169; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, vol. 1, pp. 510–511; Francis Bremer, *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 18–19.

<sup>24</sup> For a summary of the "Modern Devotion," see Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250–1550* (New Haven: Yale, 1980), pp. 96–97.

<sup>25</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, vol. 1, p. 434; Maag, *Seminary or University?* pp. 154ff.

<sup>26</sup> Aymon, *Tous les synodes*, vol. 1, p. 246; Lieburg, "Dutch Reformed Ministers without Education," p. 172.

<sup>27</sup> Maag, *Seminary or University?* pp. 173–74.

ordain them, with or without a university education. Bouwman writes, “The synod apparently wanted to maintain the right to an ecclesiastical training over against the university.”<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the two avenues for ministry training could claim some continuity with the medieval distinction between the cathedral and monastic schools. The first was entirely ecclesiastical and prepared one for ordination while the latter was for monks and often welcomed those outside the order as well.<sup>29</sup>

According to Fred van Lieburg, the developments just noted gave rise in particular to the preparatory exam. He explains that when the students of theology were allowed to preach as soon as they left the academy, the unstudied candidates from the classical *propositiën* followed the same practice, whereas they were only supposed to preach in private. The preparatory exam began as a way, he says, “to get a grip on both movements.”<sup>30</sup> Herewith we gain some context for the decision of Synod Den Hague in 1586, quoted above. Preparatory exams were normally administered after students graduated from a university, or, if they were among the “unstudied,” after those overseeing their private practice preaching recommended them to the classis.

Still, the question was not settled: the Dutch Provincial Synod of Zeeland put the matter of student preaching in the worship services on the agenda of the International Synod of Dort insofar as it asked for some direction as to how the students and candidates ought to be prepared for ministry. The question was put to the synod on December 1, 1618. The following Monday, December 3, the chairman, Johannes Bogerman, divided the question into four: “1. May students and candidates preach in public worship services? 2. May they administer baptism? 3. Should they be admitted to consistory and classis meetings? 4. May they read Scripture in the public worship services?” In sum, the responses were:

Almost all the delegations opposed non-ordained persons administering the sacraments, and this opinion carried. Regarding preaching or exhorting, this was left in the freedom of the classes, though Gomarus voiced strong arguments against it. A good number questioned the attendance of students at consistory, deacons, or classis meetings but the synod made no determination. Little was said about reading the Scriptures.<sup>31</sup>

As the Synod of Dort drew to a close in 1619, the practice of having students who had passed the preparatory exam exhort in the worship services was not prohibited. Articles 8, 19, and 20—in line with the earlier Dutch synods—were included, as follows. They did not restrict the freedom of the classes or provincial synods to allow practice sermons in the worship services.

#### Article 8

No schoolmasters, tradesmen, or others who have not studied shall be admitted to the preaching office, unless there is assurance of their singular gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, good intelligence, and discretion, together with gifts of public speaking. When such persons present themselves for the ministry, the classis itself shall (if the [provincial] synod approves) first examine them, and after the classis via its examination finds them [acceptable], it shall allow them to give

---

<sup>28</sup> “De Synode wilde blijkbaar tegenover de universiteit het recht van eigen kerkelijke opleiding handhaven.” Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, vol. 1, p. 512.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen C. Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University: The Schools of Paris and Their Critics 1100-1215* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 51.

<sup>30</sup> Lieburg, “Dutch Reformed Ministers without Education,” p. 172.

<sup>31</sup> This is quoted from my contribution to a forthcoming publication. *Acta et Documenta Synodi Nationalis Dordrechtanae (1618-1619). Vol. 2: Pro-Acta of the Synod of Dort*. Edited by Donald Sinnema, Christian Moser, and Herman J. Selderhuis. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, forthcoming.

private practice sermons for a time, and then further deal with them as it judges edifying.<sup>32</sup>

#### Article 19

The congregations shall endeavour that there be theological students who are supported from public funds.<sup>33</sup>

#### Article 20

In churches where there are more competent ministers the use of practice sermons (*propositien*) shall be introduced so that by such exercises (*oeffeninghen*) some men may be prepared for the ministry of the Word, following in this the particular order specially prepared by this synod.<sup>34</sup>

Although the number of unlettered men admitted to the ministry diminished sharply after the Synod of Dort, article 8 remains in most or all churches that still use the Church Order of Dort as the basis for their own church polity.<sup>35</sup> Article 8's provision lies back of much of the history of the practice of seminary students exhorting God's people in the official worship services as part of their practical training for ministry. Developments after Dort in the Dutch churches included the use of non-ordained persons to catechize the youth (*catechiseermeesters*), visit the sick (*ziekentroosters*), and read the Scriptures (*voorlezers*). In addition, when pietistic practices increased, unlettered men called *oefenaars* would exhort small gathering of believers in private homes.<sup>36</sup> Sometimes their simple, experiential, and practical "sermons" were more appreciated than the official Sunday sermons of the ministers. Whenever such persons led parts of the worship service or did other work that one might otherwise expect of an ordained minister, the idea that all preaching in the worship services, without exception, should be done by ordained men, was somewhat weakened.<sup>37</sup>

We can summarize the further developments as follows: Generally, the *Afscheiding* line was less concerned with higher education and more concerned with personal piety, and preaching to the heart. They also lacked preachers in the early years. Thus, they endorsed the use of students preaching practice sermons in the worship services, but they were very clear that this practice was not the giving of a sermon, but something lesser: "speaking an edifying word."<sup>38</sup> It's remarkable, in my mind, that though they had a very high view of worship and of the regulative principle, their practical bent led them to endorse student exhorting. The *Doleantie*, led by Kuyper, was more academically and less experientially oriented. It did not favour student exhorting.<sup>39</sup> As for the *Vrijgemaakt* churches, Rev. G. Van Dooren wrote in 1974, "this issue

---

<sup>32</sup> "Men zal gheen School-meesters, Handwercksluyden ofte andere die niet ghestudeert en hebben, tot het Predick-ambt toelaten, ten zy datmen versekert is van hare singuliere gaven, Godsalichey, ootmoedichey, zedichey, goet verstandt ende discretie, mitsgaders gaven van welsprekentheydt. Soo wanneer dan soodanighe persoonen sich tot den dienst presenteren, sal de Classis de selve (indient de Synodus goet vint) eerst examineren, ende na datse de selve int examen bevint, haer een tijt langh laten int prive proponeren, ende dan voorts met hen handelen, als sy oordeelen sal stichtlijck te wesen." Kuyper and Biesterveld, *Kerkelijk Handboekje*, p. 228.

<sup>33</sup> "De Gemeynen sullen arbeyden datter Studenten inder Theologie zijn, die *ex bonis publicis* onderhouden werden." Biesterveld and Kuyper, *Kerkelijk Handboekje*, p. 231.

<sup>34</sup> "Inde Kercken daer meer bequame Predicanten zijn, salmen 't gebruyck der propositien aenstellen, om door sulcke oeffeninghen eenige tot den dienst des Woordts te bereyden, volghende in desen de ordre daer van by desen Synode speciaalijck ghestelt." Biesterveld and Kuyper, *Kerkelijk Handboekje*, p. 231. It is not clear to me that the Synod of Dort ever prepared the "particular order" it speaks about here.

<sup>35</sup> For more on this article, see Bouwan, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, vol. 1, pp. 434–39.

<sup>36</sup> See K. Karels, "Oefenaar," in *De Christelijke Encyclopedie*, ed. G. Harinck et al. (Kampen: Kok, 2005).

<sup>37</sup> This comment is not designed to speak to whether this was positive or negative normatively, but only to make an historical observation.

<sup>38</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, vol. 1, p. 514.

<sup>39</sup> Van Dellen and Monsma summarize this. "The churches of the Secession in Holland, 1834, again permitted the

of ‘preaching students’ has been a zig-zag operation in recent decades. Dr. K. Schilder was an enthusiastic supporter of it. One Synod opened the way. The next one closed it again. Later it came up again and a switch was made.”<sup>40</sup> Had he been writing today, he could have added that in 1996 Synod Berkel en Rodenrijs again denied all permission for students to speak in the worship services, whereas Synod Harderwijk in 2011 once again opened the way.<sup>41</sup>

#### **4. Current Practices of Select Reformed and Presbyterian Churches**

##### *a. The Free Reformed Churches of North America, the Heritage Reformed Congregations, and Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary*

The Dean of Students of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS), Mark Kelderman, spoke by telephone with me on May 17, 2017. He described their situation vis à vis student preaching as follows. In the case of Heritage Reformed and Free Reformed students, each of these federations has its own denominational committee which accepts, oversees, and arranges support for their students of theology. Their respective Theological Education Committees (TEC) make recommendations to their Synods on a case-by-case basis. Mark emphasized that no clear policy or set pattern exists; rather, each case is decided individually. I confirmed Mark’s explanation by reviewing the FRCNA *Acts of Synod 2016*. The synod adopted the recommendations of its TEC (a) to accept two men as students for the ministry, (b) to give permission to one student to “lead services during four Lord’s days in the summer of 2016,” and (c) to “move student x to the licensure phase which gives him permission to lead services in our federation.”<sup>42</sup>

Mark also mentioned that the TECs of the FRCNA and HRC rely heavily on the recommendations of the professors at PRTS. He noted that no licensure exam exists beyond the requirement that a student preach a sermon before Synod and receive a yea or nay. My study suggests an even lower requirement: I noted that the FRCNA TEC has students submit sermons to it, not to synod, and then may have them preach part or all of a sermon before the TEC, which in turn makes its recommendation to the synod.<sup>43</sup>

The important point for our purposes is that the FRCNA and HRC do not require that their students complete a certain number of years of theological training before obtaining a license to preach; rather, they judge each situation on a case-by-case basis, with their judgments being significantly guided by the professors at PRTS (in the case of the FRCNA, their student mentor at PRTS is Dr. Gerald Bilkes, so I would imagine that his recommendations would be most weighty). As one example, the TEC writes about a particular student receiving a license to preach already after his first year at PRTS. Although they have no official policy about when such a license may be received, their report does state that this student’s permission involves an “earlier than usual limited exposure to the pulpit.” They write,

Brother x has done well and shown eagerness to learn *in his first year of studies* with a considerable course load. He and his wife are adjusting to life in Grand Rapids. He submitted a sermon on 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 to the TEC in March 2016, part of which he delivered. Your TEC

---

practice. The Churches of the Doleantie, 1886 . . . did not favor this practice. In the united Churches, the Gereformeerde Kerken, the practice varied from time to time, but in 1908 they definitively decided against “student preaching.” Thus it has been in these Churches ever since.” This was written c. 1940. Van Dellen & Monsma, *Church Order Commentary*, p. 90.

<sup>40</sup> Van Dooren, No Place in Public Worship for an ‘Edifying Word’ and ‘Training?’” p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> *Acta Generale Synode Berkel en Rodenrijs 1996*, art. 58; *Acta Generale Synode Harderwijk 2011*, art. 22 (see also appendix 3.1). The history of this matter in the Vrijgemaakt churches was thoroughly discussed in *Acta Generale Synode Groningen-Zuid 1978*, art. 109.

<sup>42</sup> *Acts of Synod 2016, Free Reformed Churches of North America*, art. 25 (p. 19).

<sup>43</sup> *Acts of Synod 2016, FRCNA*, p. 104.

decided that he be moved from the “probation phase” to the “under care phase” and recommends he receive permission to lead services on four Lord’s Days this summer, delivering sermons prepared with the assistance of a mentor. *We feel this earlier than usual limited exposure to the pulpit would serve him well in his training and also provide supply for the many vacant pulpits in Ontario.*<sup>44</sup>

One can also appreciate the close relationship between the students’ mentor at PRTS and the TEC of the FRCNA from the following statement in the TEC report to Synod 2016.

[Free Reformed] students are permitted to lead worship services during the seminary academic terms provided their academic progress, family situation, or health is not negatively impacted. They are to receive permission from their mentor, Dr. G.M. Bilkes, before accepting such engagements.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, I would add that the PRTS M.Div. program can most likely be completed in three years (it’s now down to 106 credits, but was first 153 and later 122; our CRTS program requires 131 credits).<sup>46</sup> Their catalogue stipulates that the M.Div. must normally be completed within eight years.

*b. The Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt)*

The history of student preaching in the GKNv churches has been the subject of a lot of flip-flopping between permitting it and forbidding it. Since 2011 the practice has been permitted and has been thoroughly integrated into the curriculum of the Theological University in Kampen (TUK).

First, here is an overview of their training program. Those who aspire to ministry in the GKNv (which as of 16 June 2017 apparently may include women) are expected to come to the TUK for a three-year bachelor’s program, followed by a three-year master’s program. Four terms or semesters occur each year (I assume this is true of both the bachelor’s and master’s levels). Each term involves six to seven weeks of teaching followed by three to four weeks of exam preparation. The students take three or four courses per term. The professors typically teach for three of the four terms, and oversee thesis writing for the fourth term. July and August are vacation months.

Kees van Dusseldorp explained to me by email how their homiletics program works vis à vis the consent for students to preach in the worship services.

The two tables alongside provide an overview of the components of their introduction to preaching program. The left column provides the academic topics that are covered in the classroom while the right column provides various practical training components that are designed to complement the lectures.

	Academisch	Practisch
M1A	basics – kompreek	kompreek
M1B	doel, structuur, taal - masterpreekcollege-	analyse
M1C	preekvoorbereiding preekcollege preken uit OT [liturgiek / presentatie]	voorgaan OT-preek
M1D	preekcollege persoon prediker themapreek	preek
	mogelijkheid tot zomerpreken	

<sup>44</sup> *Acts of Synod 2016, FRCNA*, p. 105 (italics added).

<sup>45</sup> *Acts of Synod 2016, FRCNA*, p. 105.

<sup>46</sup> These numbers are based on *Acts of Synod 2016, FRCNA*, p. 105, and the *PRTS 2016–2017 Catalogue*, p. 37.

It appears that the TUK provides a substantial introduction to preaching in the first year of the Master's program, and then allows students to deliver sermons in the summer afterward. About this, Kees wrote, "At this stage the student preaches only in the congregation where he is interning. The mentor is present and also gives an evaluation. The homiletics professor discusses the sermon and reflects on it with the student after stage 1A and after stage 1D."<sup>47</sup> Earlier he had explained, "The ecclesiastical responsibility for this lies with the TUK, which makes use of a preacher-mentor in the local church."<sup>48</sup> Officially this is not yet considered "preekconsent" and does not involve the Classis. I assume that "doorgande preekoefening in de praktijk (3 preken)" under the "praktijklijn" during the second year of studies means that more sermons may be preached under the same conditions as they were after the first year.

**OVERZICHT PREEKOPLEIDING**

	Stage	Maakplan
Ma1A	preken in context: missionair, inclusief, casuïstiek, NT / Missiologie	doorgande preekoefening in de praktijk (3 preken)
Ma2E	-masterpreekcollege-	
Ma3A	desiderata: preekstructuren, hoorderbeeld, homiletische communicatie, vertellen	
Ma3E	homiletiek & preekvisie / masterpreekcollege!	eindstage (6 preken)
Ma3C		
Ma3D		
		mogelijkheid tot preekconsent afstudeerproject preekplan

Like the situation in the HRC and FRCNA, we encounter something less than blanket permission to speak an edifying word but more than no practice preaching at all: the student may deliver practice sermons in a worship service, but only in a selected congregation where he is interning and only during July and August. Plus, he must have the mentor's prior approval for the sermon.

Blanket permission to preach practice sermons in all the churches must wait until after the student has nearly completed the third year of the Master's degree. On this point, Kees wrote,

Our students can only request a consent to preach (*preekconsent*) from the classis if they have achieved the standing of "skilled beginner" (*startbekwaam*). For this they need to have sufficiently completed the last internship (stage 3C). With consent to preach they are authorized to preach independently in the churches. The ecclesiastical responsibility for this is borne by the classis, which designates one or more tutors . . . . In the third year of the Master's degree the big final internship of eight weeks occurs, wherein they carry out the full workload of a preacher under the guidance of the mentor. If the TUK considers this sufficient, the student receives recognition for the practical training.<sup>49</sup>

The present practice in the GKNv helps us consider the possibility that a student might receive permission to speak an edifying word one year sooner, but for that year have the permission restricted to work in a particular situation, under a particular mentor. The student would then not necessarily have

<sup>47</sup> "De student preekt alleen in deze stage alleen in de stagegemeente. De mentor is hierbij aanwezig en geeft ook een beoordeling. De docent homiletiek bespreekt de preek + het reflectieverslag van de student na periode 1A en na periode 1D." Email from Kees van Dusseldorp, 17 May 2017. Note that this material is not be published, per his request.

<sup>48</sup> "De kerkelijke verantwoordelijkheid hiervoor ligt bij de TU, die hierbij gebruik maakt van een predikant-mentor in de locale gemeente." Email from Kees van Dusseldorp, 17 May 2017. Note that this material is not be published, per his request.

<sup>49</sup> "Onze studenten kunnen pas 'preekconsent' aanvragen bij de classis, als zij de kwalificatie 'startbekwaam' hebben behaald. Daarvoor is het nodig dat zij de eindstage (periode 3C) voldoende hebben afgesloten. Met preekconsent zijn zij bevoegd om zelfstandig in de kerken te preken. De kerkelijke verantwoordelijkheid wordt hiervoor gedragen door de classis, die hiervoor een of meer begeleiders aanwijst . . . In de Ma3 zit de grote eindstage van 8 weken, waarbij ze het volledige predikantswerk onder begeleiding van de mentor uitvoeren. Als de TU dit voldoende acht, krijgt de student de praktijkaantekening." Email from Kees van Dusseldorp, 17 May 2017. Note that this material is not be published, per his request.

permission to speak an edifying word in all the churches, but only under an assigned mentor for the duration of the internship (assigned per an arrangement between a given church and CRTS). This would alleviate the concern that the professors might have about students taking on too much preaching while the lectures are being given as well as concerns that the churches might have that a student is allowed on the pulpits too early. That said, the concern of the GKNv is not so much to limit the permission by time and place, but to put in place a good ecclesiastical framework for the development of the student, wherein the role of the mentor is very important.<sup>50</sup>

*c. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and notes re WSC practicums*

Whereas in the case of the FRCNA and HRC, one may identify PRTS as their own “denominational seminary,” no seminary may be identified as belonging to the OPC. Rather, they generally draw their students from Westminster Theological Seminary, Westminster Seminary California, Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, etc. This means that they cannot enjoy the kind of close relationship between their churches and a seminary as one may observe in the FRCNA and HRC. One could say much the same of the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA).

The OPC Form of Government in their *Book of Church Order* states,

It is highly reproachful to religion and dangerous to the church to entrust the preaching of the gospel to weak and ignorant men. The presbytery shall therefore license a candidate only if he has received a bachelor of arts degree, or its academic equivalent, from a college or university of reputable academic standing, and has completed an adequate course of study lasting at least one year and a half in a theological seminary.<sup>51</sup>

OPC students who want an internship are expected to fill out a form and send it to the Committee on Christian Education of the OPC.<sup>52</sup> The OPC, in turn, expects that the student will currently be attending seminary somewhere. This results in sometimes parallel requirements from the seminary and from the OPC.

For example, Westminster Theological Seminary in California states,

The Director of Field Education advises students of service opportunities and coordinates the fulfillment of field education requirements with the M.Div. students and pastoral internship supervisors. Each M.Div. student is required to register for the pastoral internship (FE691) during the spring semester of his first full year of study at WSC. The Field Education Program requires seven hundred (700) hours of supervised ministry experience.<sup>53</sup>

The Field Education Program of WSCAL describes in detail their expectations.<sup>54</sup> What the seminary wants

---

<sup>50</sup> This point was added by Kees van Dusseldorp in a follow-up email on 29 June 2017. He also understands that the present report could appear in ecclesiastical publications such as reports, minutes, or acts of ecclesiastical assemblies, and he gave his approval for this.

<sup>51</sup> “Form of Government,” ch. 21.3, in *Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (2012).

<sup>52</sup> See <http://opc.org/cce/Intern/InternApplicationForm.pdf>. Accessed 23 May 2017.

<sup>53</sup> See <https://www.wscal.edu/academics/current-students/field-education-and-placement/field-education-program-mdiv>. Accessed 23 May 2017.

<sup>54</sup> See [http://wscal.edu/media/docs/CurrentStudents\\_FEManual.pdf](http://wscal.edu/media/docs/CurrentStudents_FEManual.pdf). Their various forms are available here: <https://www.wscal.edu/academics/current-students/field-education-and-placement/field-education-program-mdiv>. Accessed 23 May 2017.

to be very clear about is that they have a certain minimum requirement of 700 hours. Students are welcome to go beyond this if they wish. The requirements for how long a student must have studied in a seminary before being granted licensure is, as one would expect, something set by the churches. In the case of the OPC, a year and a half of seminary is required.

*d. Bible Presbyterian Church*

The BPC, historically connected to/led by Dr. Carl MacIntire, has decided that “the presbytery shall admit a candidate to licensure only if he has received a bachelor of arts degree, or its academic equivalent, from an accredited college or university. He must also have completed at least two years of study in a theological seminary” (FOG, 13.4).<sup>55</sup> This stipulation parallels the current requirements in the CanRCs, inasmuch as our “three years” is often considered equivalent to most other seminaries’ “two years,” our first year generally being considered to be propaedeutic.<sup>56</sup>

*e. Free Reformed Churches of Australia*

In 1996 the FRCA adopted the same practices as the CanRCs, in terms of permitting seminary students to speak an edifying word. The churches decided: “To grant permission to speak an edifying word/preaching consent in the churches to theological students who satisfy the following set conditions: . . . they shall have completed at least two years of theological studies at one of the theological colleges of our sister churches (not including the introductory year, that is, they still complete three years of training at the theological college [i.e., CRTS]).”<sup>57</sup>

Their Church Order has not been changed, but these articles are connected by topic to article 18 of their CO.<sup>58</sup>

**a. Proposed Joint Church Order 2012 and notes re MARS homiletics program**

Desire for unity of the CanRC and URCNA gave rise to an agreement reached by a joint committee for a common church order. As CanRCs, we have already committed ourselves to following the PJCO in the event that unity with the URCNA obtains.<sup>59</sup> The 2012 edition of the PJCO, art. 4, requires one year of theological education before the licensure exam is conducted. The licensure lasts “for the duration of his theological training.” Note that the requirement for one year of seminary, as found in the PJCO, is not stated in the present church order of either the CanRCs or URCNA. Not surprisingly, the Synod 2010 of the CanRCs did consider that raising the licensure requirement to a minimum of two years of seminary training ought to be considered:

Licensure - A number of our churches raise questions about a student being able to exhort after only completing one year of theological education. This objection is related to the fact that students from Hamilton need three years of theological education before they can exhort in our churches. It should be noted that there is an obvious discrepancy here between our respective churches that no doubt should be discussed and resolved.

---

<sup>55</sup> Online at [http://bpc.org/?page\\_id=430](http://bpc.org/?page_id=430). Accessed 23 May 2017.

<sup>56</sup> One could assess just how much CRTS’s first year is propaedeutic. For instance, the homiletics course takes the students through all the steps from Scripture text to sermon, and the symbolics course works through all the creeds and confessions of the CanRCs in detail. Some of this assessment will occur below.

<sup>57</sup> *Acts of the 2006 Synod of FRCA*, art. 27.

<sup>58</sup> See also *Acts of the 2012 Synod of the FRCA (Armadale)*, art. 103, for further decisions relevant to regulating licensure. The FRCA Church Order, with standing decisions pertinent to each article adjoined, is available online at [http://synod.frca.org.au/churchorder/ChurchOrder\\_with\\_FRCA\\_synod\\_decisions\\_\(updated2015\).pdf](http://synod.frca.org.au/churchorder/ChurchOrder_with_FRCA_synod_decisions_(updated2015).pdf). Accessed 27 June 2017.

<sup>59</sup> The PJCO 2010 was “provisionally adopted” by Synod 2010 as the Church Order of a united federation. See *Acts of General Synod of the CanRC 2010*, art. 151.

At the same time it should be noted that students coming from Mid- America take at least three courses in Homiletics in their first year of study and that more attention is given to the preparation of sermons.

With regard to (Westminster) California, the catalogue appears to indicate that only one course in Homiletics is required.

In light of these different approaches the COC committee should give serious consideration to raising the minimum requirement to two years before granting licensure to exhort.<sup>60</sup>

Synod 2010's consideration about "three course in Homiletics in their first year of study" at MARS was correct at the time. However, changes have taken place since that time.<sup>61</sup> The 2016–2017 catalogue of MARS has, for the first year of their M.Div. program, one 4 credit course in "Homiletics & Catechetics" and one 1 credit course in "Applied Sermon." This amounts to less than what CRTS does in its first year: students in CRTS receive a 3 credit course in "Homiletics" which requires turning in their first sermon and delivering it in front of their freshmen classmates only, plus they attend Sermon Session for two hours every week. Sermon Session involves all the seminary students and is the equivalent of 6 credits for the year, except that the freshmen do not need to prepare sermons for that class; they observe their more senior students preaching and receiving feedback. In addition, depending what year is in view in CRTS's four-year interim-semester curriculum rotation, the students may also be exposed to a focus on homiletics for the duration of the two-week interim semester. Finally, CRTS intends now to include a sermon workshop in every year's interim semester. **More about this in some of the final considerations below.**

*f. United Reformed Churches in North America current practices*

The URCNA church order speaks of a "licensure exam" which, if sustained, grants one an "exhorting license."<sup>62</sup> The student's consistory is to obtain a "seminary faculty recommendation." No stipulation exists regarding the requisite amount of seminary training before a consistory administers this licensure exam. "An exhorting license is normally valid for one year."

*g. Vicariate in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.*

Compared to the practices of the other churches described herein, the RCNZ has a unique system of internship which they call a "vicariate."<sup>63</sup> They consider this program to be "an integral part of the

---

<sup>60</sup> *Acts of General Synod of the CanRC 2010*, art. 151.

<sup>61</sup> I confirmed these points in an email with Dr. Cornel Venema, president of MARS, on 28 June 2017. I asked him whether "three courses in Homiletics in their first year of study" was still the case, and whether every course included a sermon component (as someone else had suggested to me). He wrote, "The statement in the Minutes of your synod 2010 is a correct statement of what was true at the time (3 courses in the Junior year, including a "Sermon Types" course in the January interim). However, we have removed the "Sermon Types" course from the curriculum, so that there are only two courses that juniors take that focus especially on sermon preparation, etc. I do believe that the junior courses, Hebrew Reading and Biblical Hermeneutics, also have a homiletical component, but it is not a large part of either course.

Regarding the sermon with "every course," that too used to be the case but we have modified our curriculum somewhat in this respect. We no longer have a sermon component with the dogmatics courses, though we do require a one hour homiletical component with all of the OT and NT exegetical courses. In addition to this, we still have a distinct course on Catechism Preaching."

<sup>62</sup> *Church Order of the URCNA*, appendix 2.

<sup>63</sup> This program was helpfully reviewed in Dr. Arjan de Visser, "Help for Beginning Ministers," in *Clarion* 65 (Aug 12, 2016), pp. 430–32.

theological training.” Since 1986, they have required that, “every graduating theological student who desires entry into the ministry of these churches and is deemed suitable to serve as a vicar in one of the congregations of the RCNZ shall serve a vicariate for a period of at least twelve months.”<sup>64</sup>

One of the guidelines for this program helps us consider the conditions which we might insist upon for any seminary student to be permitted to speak an edifying word, namely, that supervision be maintained and training serve as the goal. The handbook of the RCNZ states, “The purpose of a vicariate is to provide training for a vicar. Except in exceptional circumstances vicars should not be placed in vacant congregations or in isolated settings where they cannot be properly supervised and trained.” Therefore “experienced and able ministers” ought to provide the vicar with his training. This program is funded by the denomination via a central fund, which may help the local church with up to two thirds of the funding. Married vicars must receive at least two thirds and single vicars at least one half of the recommended salary of a minister.

CanRCs and seminary students who have completed their studies are free to enter into arrangements similar to the RCNZ vicariate. Flexibility in this respect is appropriate—one need not require a year-long vicariate for every candidate minister, but could waive the requirement for those who feel ready and who are judged ready for the full responsibilities. Further, when our churches grant their new pastors a reduced workload for the first year or more, they are in effect doing things similar to what might be done in a vicariate, except that the man is in our case already in office. The further benefit of the vicariate is that a particular minister or committee becomes responsible for the progress of the vicar

Dangers include too long of a vicariate, wherein the vicar is permitted to do most or all of the work of an ordained pastor, but at a lower cost to the congregation and in position subordinate to his fellow pastors. Congregations might be motivated to keep the vicar as he is, rather than move him on to the full office of minister. The pastors working around him might also enjoy their power over him. To prevent such things, vicariate arrangements should have definite time limits.

As a lesson from history, note that in Strasbourg’s ten parishes in the sixteenth century, would-be pastors followed a four-step process towards ordination: first, a one- to three-year vicariate in one of the nine villages that surrounded Strasbourg (in a 10 to 15 km radius); second, nomination as a *titulaire* to a rural post; then a vicariate in the city of Strasbourg itself; and, finally, after a total of some fifteen to twenty-five years, he might gain the title of pastor in the city.<sup>65</sup> This leads to an unhealthy hierarchy. The ministry of the Word should not be regarded as a professional position, akin to moving from associate professor to assistant professor to full professor, but as an office and calling from God that knows just one category: minister of the word, also known as pastor of the congregation/flock.

## **5. Further Reflections**

*Relating This Matter to CRTS’s Core Values*

- “Serving our supporting churches”
  - o We serve the churches not merely by doing what they ask, but also thinking alongside them about what might be most beneficial to helping supply the churches with men of God who are equipped for every good work, particularly for preaching (2 Tim 3:17).

---

<sup>64</sup> See Sections 3.12 to 3.17 of the *Office Bearers’ Handbook* of the RCNZ for all of their vicariate regulations, available at <http://www.rcnz.org.nz/synodical/OBH.pdf>. Accessed 28 June 2017.

<sup>65</sup> Bernard Vogler, “Recrutement et carrière des pasteurs strasbourgeois au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Revue d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 48 (1968), pp. 169–70.

*Input from the Senate of CRTS*

On June 20, 2107 I presented a draft discussion to the Senate of CRTS and received positive feedback. When I polled all my colleagues at the meeting, all were in favour of having the churches create room for licensure one year earlier than is presently the case. The not-yet-adopted minutes of that meeting recorded the main points of the discussion as follows:

*Earlier Licensure* As part of the strategic initiative for which he is responsible, Dr. Van Raalte presents an extensive report in connection with the possibility of earlier licensure for students of the ministry. To be more specific, the option of having CanRC students receive preaching consent after their second, rather than third year, of studies is the focal point. Senate thanks him for his careful work and gives him feedback which includes these main points:

- a. The possibility of an earlier licensure should be an option for students, *not* mandatory. Not every student is ready for it after his second year.
- b. Concern is raised that some students may put so much time and effort into the practical benefits of opportunities for preaching and catechetical teaching that their academic work suffers.
- c. One possibility would be to take a more graduated approach to licensure in which students start with a more limited licensure (e.g., perhaps summer only) and then progress to a broader one (e.g., entire year). Some concern is raised that students will not be satisfied with this kind of arrangement.
- d. Another possibility is that the seminary mentor and each student will together assess how much preaching and catechetical teaching is reasonable, given the individual's personal and family circumstances.
- e. It is important that if a student opts for earlier licensure then he must take his full internship after his second year of studies, otherwise he will have license to preach wherever he wishes, but he will not have supervision or the professor of Homiletics will have many sermons to review in the summer. Neither situation is recommended.
- f. In order to increase the amount of experience that students receive in preaching before ordination there are two main options:
  - i. Increase the maximum amount of summer internship weeks from the present 12 weeks to 15 weeks. This would allow a student to split his summer internship over two summers (e.g., 10 weeks one summer and 5 weeks the next summer), but it would also require a request for more federational funding via the church at Guelph;
  - ii. Simply swap the mission and full-summer internships, so that the full-summer (10-12 weeks) comes after the second year, and the required, minimum two-week mission internship comes after the third year. So long as the mission internship requirement is fulfilled the student could fill the rest of his summer by extending his internship on a mission field and preaching there, serving as summer supply in a local congregation (at the congregation's expense), or finding a job for the rest of the summer. This option does not involve extra federational funding.

Dr. Van Raalte appreciates the feedback and will refine his proposal and present it to the Board.

Thus far the not-yet-adopted minutes of the Senate meeting of June 20, 2017.

*Considerations: neutral*

- What language to use? License to preach, license to exhort, practice preaching, practice sermons, exhorting, exercises, proposing, speaking an edifying word, permission to speak an edifying word, license to speak an edifying word, etc.
  - o The word “license” or “licensure” denotes formal or official permission.
  - o Speaking simply of “licensure” avoids the question of “license to what . . .?” but per our Church Order we would understand this to be a “licensure” or “permission” to “speak an edifying word.”
  - o In recognition of the importance of the minister’s office, it might be better to avoid the words “preaching” and “sermon” for what the student does prior to ordination. Although in the New Testament non-ordained church members are sometimes subject of the verb “to preach the gospel/evangelize” (e.g., Acts 8:4), the more common usage reserves this and similar terms for those in the office of elder/overseer/pastor/teacher/minister of the Word.
    - Perhaps “practice sermons” and “practice preaching” are more suitable terms than merely “sermons” and “preaching.”
    - “Speak an edifying word” is a circumlocution that serves the same purpose. I have not investigated its origins, but wonder whether it arose with the Secession churches.<sup>66</sup>
  - o Note that the current licensure exam should be regarded as the first part of the preparatory exam, held earlier.
- Article 21 of the CanRC CO mentions two reasons to give students permission to speak an edifying word: first, for their own training; second, that they may become known to the churches.
  - o In my view, an earlier permission to speak an edifying word stems mostly from the first ground, not the second, though both could be suitable grounds.
  - o If a student at CRTS does not desire to enter the gospel ministry, he should neither seek nor be granted licensure. Currently, CRTS assumes that all students admitted to the M.Div. program do desire to enter gospel ministry.
- If a student is intending to enter the ministry, but not in the CanRCs, it is worthy of discussion whether permission per article 21 ought to be granted. If it is, this should only be done in discussion with the student’s home church body.<sup>67</sup>
- If the concern of seminary students is to increase the number of written sermons or to have more practice in oral delivery, both of these goals can be reached without the permission to “speak an edifying word” in the public worship services: students could be assigned more sermons during each academic year and could be given more opportunities to deliver these. This would be similar to practices of the Reformed churches to have “prophesyings” or “practice sermons” in various places and times, but not necessarily in the worship services, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
- *But* if the concern of students is to have an additional full-summer internship, under a mentor’s oversight, that includes conducting worship services and speaking an edifying word in this setting,

---

<sup>66</sup> Bouwman’s church order commentary say’s of the non-ordained man, “he can *only* speak an edifying word.” H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht* (Kampen: Kok, 1928), vol. 1, p. 517. The 2011 church order of the *Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*, art. 3, also uses this expression. Available at <http://kerkrecht.nl/node/5572>. Accessed 29 June 2017.

<sup>67</sup> For comparison, the Protestant Reformed Churches have a category of “Diploma non-licentiate students” who are defined as “those student from other denominations who are attending the seminary but who do not intend to enter the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches and who therefore will not be licensed to speak a word of edification in the Protestant Reformed Churches.” *Catalogue (August 2013–July 2014): Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, p. 14. Available online at <https://www.prca.org/Seminary/SemCatalog2013-14.pdf>. Accessed 29 June 2017.

they must gain the churches' permission to do this a year (or more) earlier than in the present system.

- Also, if the students and seminary desire to have more involvement of the elders of the churches in evaluation of the student sermons, once again the simplest way to obtain this would be to allow the students to deliver more practice sermons in the worship service settings.
- If students are granted earlier licensure, the churches and seminary should ensure that they use this permission by taking their summer internship immediately, under the guidance of an ordained minister. Students should not use the opportunity to preach here and there in the summer after their second year, apart from an internship program with an overseeing mentor.

*Considerations: against earlier licensure*

- Worship services may come to be viewed as a training ground more than a meeting with the Lord; the reverence of worship could diminish
- The value that we should place on the *office* of minister could be diminished
- Principle: Through the consistory's call to gather, God calls his people together for worship and the service is fully a worship service, whether an ordained minister, elder, or student for the ministry leads the worship service
  - o Thus: students don't "pray" for a blessing by changing the benedictory words of Scripture. They are to act as the Lord's mouthpiece, by virtue of being authorized by the consistory to lead the worship service.
    - But . . . one danger: If we push too hard on the point that the consistory oversees the worship service and downplay the need for the preacher to be ordained, we open the way for people to argue that unordained persons, including women, may lead worship services, under the authority of the consistory. It's good to be aware of this danger.
- A student who is still learning how to interpret the Scriptures and is still developing his homiletical style may make some serious blunders and gain a poor reputation. However, if everyone knows that he is learning, forgiveness will be extended, so long as the student receives correction in humility.
- If a student is not intending to enter the ministry but rather to study further, he should not be given the opportunity to preach practice sermons. Our current "one-rule policy" doesn't consider such a circumstance.
  - o If the churches make inflexible guidelines that all M.Div. students must follow in exactly the same way, the students, churches, and CRTS professors may experience some frustration at not being able to tailor a student's education to his particular strengths and weaknesses and desires, as well as the church's desires.

*Considerations: in favour of earlier licensure*

- Students who are already doing well in preaching will do even better
- Students whose performance is borderline will receive more independent evaluation, apart from CRTS professors' assessments. The professors and students appreciate this.
- The churches will receive men who are better prepared for all aspects of office, at least from a practical and pastoral standpoint
- After a second-year internship, if students so choose, they will return to seminary knowing their Scriptures better, hopefully much better equipped to preach, more acquainted with all aspects of the ministry. As a result, in the seminary:
  - o the quality of Sermon Session sermons ought to increase

- the understanding of the lectures ought to improve
- the questions of the students and their discussion contributions in all classes, especially in Sermon Session, will likewise improve
- students who serve a summer internship should have read at least one more book in homiletics and another in pastoral care, besides all their work in exegesis
- Ministers who may be sort-of “coasting” along will obtain a renewed sense of purpose as they invest something into the training of future ministers.
- Churches will strengthen their ties to CRTS through their increased interactions over the summers with CRTS students.
- The student will have more connections and supports to fall back on once he enters ministry, for he has forged more relationships with those who are already in ministry.
- The only way that a student can obtain a full summer internship and be immersed in nearly *all* the duties of a ministers of the Word is if he receives a license to exhort, so I don’t know how to recommend any further interning apart from giving the student who merits such, a license to exhort at an earlier stage than is presently granted.
- Compared to practices in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch churches, we would not be seeking approval for unlettered men to lead worship (the unlettered *proponenten*, for which see the appendix to this report). All of our students have undergone full high school and undergraduate training and are in seminary.
- The current CanRC process has a safeguard compared to the FRCNA and HRC process: CanRC students need the endorsement of all of the professors, not just one, inasmuch as the letter to Classis regarding a student’s successful completion of the requisite classes at CRTS must come from the Senate.
- In recent times CRTS students have twice requested an earlier licensure—three students nearing the end of their Sophomore Year in 2012 and all the students in 2016. Obtaining more licensure opportunities would certainly gratify the students.
- URCNA students continue to come to CRTS, and all of them may apply in their churches for licensure after completing their first year of study. The disparity between their situation and the situation of the CanRC students needs to be addressed, either by carefully defending our own current practice while not denigrating the URCNA practice, or by adjusting our own practice.
- Members of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries appreciated their *oefenaar*’s exhorting sometimes more than their preacher’s preaching. Why?
  - If the reason was due to the preacher’s liberalism and the *oefenaar*’s orthodoxy, well and good.
  - But if the reason was because the great learning of the preacher put his sermons out of reach of the people, that would have been too bad.
  - If our students can learn as well as possible how to reach the people with good, orthodox preaching, the churches will be greatly blessed.
- We live in a very practical age: a humanities’ training is not appreciated because it doesn’t teach one how to “do” anything. Much better is training in the sciences, trades, medicine, law, etc. (apparently!) We have to face this reality, and we have to admit that at the end of the day, the minister’s sermons have to land. They have to make sense; they have to relate to real life; they have to interact with the culture of the day; they have to make the message of the Scriptures clear rather than cloudy. Whatever we can do to contribute to this outcome—all the while maintaining underneath it a totally solid academic education for the mature handling of the Scriptures—we should do.

- Elders would be (or at least: ought to be) more fully engaged in the training of students for the ministry. Their office of overseeing the doctrine of their fellow preaching elders would be well utilized when they assist in the training of students, give the students feedback on their preaching, and interact with CRTS about all these things.
- The idea of having a license to preach, but only in a limited venue, is already present in the CO, in article 8. “and allow them to speak an edifying word *in the churches of the classis.*”<sup>68</sup> Certain limitations to licensure could therefore be considered more broadly, though wisdom suggests that some freedom be left with the churches and perhaps the seminary in terms of how to implement possible limitations in particular cases.

*Considerations: with respect to the CRTS program and preparation for preaching*

- CRTS has a homiletics course in year 1, semester 2, 1511 Homiletics, for 2 hrs/wk
  - o The only other homiletics course is in year 3, 3511 Homiletics II, 2 hrs/wk
  - o Thus, the first-year homiletics course is quite significant. It teaches students the steps from exegesis to sermon
  - o In 1511 Homiletics the students each write and present one sermon
- The Freshmen join in Sermon Session every week for two hours and continue this throughout their seminary training. Thus, by the end of Year Two they will have participated in four semesters of Sermon Session, presumably learning a lot about sermon preparation. Their participation in this course in their Freshman Year requires only their attendance and therefore they receive no credit for this. However, if they are listening, they should be learning a lot. In subsequent years, students receive two credits per year for Sermon Session; to obtain these, they write three sermons per year and attend this class for two hours per week all year long.
- The cycle of four January Interim Semesters highlights the topic of preaching in one of those four terms. The likelihood that a student will have benefited from this by the end of his second year of studies is 50 percent, and the likelihood of the same after three years is 75 percent
- Homiletics II occurs in the sophomore year (3511 Homiletics). Thus, limiting ourselves to the three-year cycle, a student has a 33 percent likelihood of having taken this course by the end of his second year of studies, and a 66 percent likelihood of having taken it by the end of his third year of studies. This means that it there is a 33 percent likelihood that the student *has not* taken his second homiletics class by the time he seeks permission to speak an edifying word and, assuming he is granted the license to preach, goes on to prepare sermons for an entire summer.
  - o In that case, the question whether a student has had both homiletics courses before his licensure exam is actually moot. The only homiletics course that we can be *certain* the student has taken is 1511, plus Sermon Session.
    - Therefore, from the point of view of our homiletics courses, granting licensure a year earlier than presently would not be much different.
  - o The concern of CanRC Synods (and other such bodies’ decisions that I have read) was not how many homiletics courses a student had taken, but how much instruction he had received in symbolics and dogmatics. In his practice preaching, the student had to be able to get Reformed doctrine right.

---

<sup>68</sup> The full text of article 8 in the CanRC CO, regarding those who might become ministers apart from the normal path of a full theological education, is as follows: “Persons who have not pursued the regular course of study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When such persons present themselves for the ministry, classis, after the approval of regional synod, shall examine them in a preparatory examination and allow them to speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis; and further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, with observance of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.”

- From that perspective our Freshman Symbolics course plays a very significant role and does help open the way to an earlier licensure. In this course the history, contents, and meaning of all the Reformed confessions is explained. The contents of the entire Heidelberg Catechism and outlines of the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort are memorized. As far as I know, this requirement is not matched by many, if any, other seminaries in North America.
- How many sermons have CRTS students typically written by the end of their second year?
  - Freshman students will have written one sermon by the end of their first year. They write and deliver three additional sermons every year thereafter. Therefore, they will have written and delivered four sermons by the end of their second year, and seven by the end of their third year.
  - Ministers who receive students for their two-week internship after the first year often have the student write a sermon each week. This would mean that the student has likely written, with guidance, some six sermons by the end of his second year.

**Three other points mentioned by the Board of Governors:** “The Board . . . asks Dr. Van Raalte to study this further with the input of the Senate, including looking at internship opportunities besides preaching, financial implications for the churches, stress and workload on the students.”

#### *Internship opportunities besides preaching*

- Already in place are the two-week internship after the Freshman Year and the mission internship (2–4 weeks) after one’s Sophomore Year.
  - These internship opportunities should not be reduced, replaced, or otherwise jeopardized by the increased availability of another summer internship serving a CanRC. After all, even students interested in mission should learn as well as possible how church life ought to function in a well-established congregation.
  - The churches could consider making provisions for a longer mission internship. Currently this internship is limited to 2–4 weeks in part because no financing model is in place for this. In some cases language barriers may also be a factor.
- Internships in hospital, prison, or military chaplaincies are currently subsumed under the 2–4 week mission internship. Making an opening for a possible internship after the second year of studies opens up the possibility of a longer internship in a chaplaincy or mission situation after the student’s third year.

#### *Financial implications for churches*

- The church orders of the Dutch churches of the sixteenth century spoke of the “larger and more numerous churches” setting up preaching schools. These churches were expected to do this because they were likelier to have the more able ministers who could oversee the students and likelier to be able to provide financial support to the theological students.
- The RCNZ’s vicariate regulations provide a funding model for each student’s 12-month vicariate wherein the churches, via their denominational fund, provide up to two thirds of the cost, and the local church wherein the vicar works is expected to supply the remaining third (see above). Such a model is worthy of consideration.
- The current situation of financial support from the federation-wide fund administered by Guelph-Emmanuel is for a maximum of twelve weeks. If this could be increased to a maximum of fifteen weeks, students could, for example, pursue five of those weeks after their second year, and ten weeks after their third year. This would allow us to keep the mission internship, and would have the students split their second summer between up to five weeks of a mission internship and up

to five weeks of a regular internship. Alternatively, a student would have the option of following a full ten-week internship after his second year, followed by a mission internship after his third year, with the remaining weeks of that third summer filled out with another, shorter internship in a local church.

#### *Stress and workload on the students*

- This proposal suggests no changes to student workload, as we are discussing the summer months, not the academic year.
  - o Some have argued that the students need time away from the books to exercise their bodies and relax their minds; thus, a full-summer internship after the second year is not advisable.
    - However, whether students need such a “brain break” can be determined by the student and mentor together: this would also suggest that if further internships were to be made possible, they should be *optional*, not required.
    - If one was to propose an optional increased number of internship weeks, occurring after the second year, students would still have an entire summer after their first year to work in other vocations.
- Concern for stress and workload on the students during the academic year leads one to support the FRCNA and HRC model, where the professor(s) have a say in how many preaching appointments the students may take during the academic year.
  - o The symbiotic relationship between the churches and the seminary/professors noted in the FRCNA and HRC model is commendable, especially since CRTS is an institution “of the churches” and “for the churches.”
  - o The ecclesiastical assemblies might consider entrusting certain oversight responsibilities to (a) the director of the Pastoral Training Program, (b) each student’s particular mentor at CRTS, (c) each student’s particular internship mentor—a minister in the churches.
- Concern for stress and workload on the students during the academic year also suggests that we might benefit from elements of the FRCNA, HRC, and GKNv models, wherein a student’s opportunity to speak an edifying word after the second year of studies might be restricted to work under just one particular mentor, and therefore probably only for a restricted time (normally for the summer months only).

#### *Comments from URCNA Minister(s)*

- Highly recommended to have an earlier licensure
- Students come back from their internships changed: they pay more attention in class, ask better questions, know people better, and usually have a vastly improved ability to preach

#### *Previous Attention to This Topic*

- CRTS students in 2012 sought feedback from the CRTS faculty re going to Classis to request licensure after their second year of studies.
- CRTS students in 2016 similarly sought feedback from the CRTS faculty for the same. In their proposal they quoted Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene, lecturer in Ecclesiology at CRTS from 1981–1985. He wrote, “The more practical experience one who prepares for the ministry can get, the better it is.”<sup>69</sup>

**End of Classis Pacific West overture**

---

<sup>69</sup> W.W.J. Van Oene, *With Common Consent* (Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 1990), p. 101.

## 8.4.2 Overtures from Regional Synod East

#### 8.4.2.1 Overture – Seminary Student Licensure

## RSE November 14, 2018

### Response to Licensure Proposal

#### Material

1. Proposal from Classis Ontario West, May 23, 2018 re: Licensure Proposal
2. Letters from: Cornerstone and Fergus North

#### 1. Observations

1. Classis Ontario West recommends the adoption of a proposal to permit seminary students to pursue licensure following two years of study in the M.Div program
2. The church of Fergus North endorses the proposal.

#### 2. Considerations

The proposal makes a strong case for permitting seminary students to pursue licensure following two years of study in the M.Div program.

#### 3. Recommendation

That Regional Synod adopt the following proposal:

Regional Synod East overtures General Synod 2019 to adopt the following proposal.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Observations. We have observed that:

- a. The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) is the seminary of our federation of churches and exists primarily for the sake of training men to be ministers of the Word in our churches.<sup>2</sup> CRTS teaches all the academic subjects for the Master of Divinity degree that the churches deem necessary for the work of ministry and endeavours to inculcate as many of the practical skills as possible. The M.Div. program at CRTS has been a four-year program since the 1975–1976 academic year.
- b. The churches have agreed in article 21 of the Church Order that, “Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying word, others may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations, for their own training, and in order that they may become known to the congregations.”

---

<sup>1</sup> This proposal which was initially prepared by Dr. Ted Van Raalte at the request of and with the subsequent approval of the Senate and Board of Governors of our Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary.

<sup>2</sup> While “The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches” remains the legal name of the institution involved in this proposal, its operational name became “Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary” per the Acts of Synod 2010, art. 152. Both names will be used in this proposal. Also, the proposal will use the expressions “permission to speak an edifying word” and “licensure” interchangeably.

- c. The wording of article 21 of the CO makes a distinction between the article itself and some further “general ecclesiastical regulations.”
- d. Very soon after the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches was established (as a three-year program), the churches agreed in Synod New Westminster 1971, art. 76 that, “Students of theology may receive the right to speak an edifying word in the Churches on the following conditions: . . . 2. They shall not do so unless they have completed at least two years of theological studies . . . 4. They shall present a certificate from the Faculty of our Theological College that they have satisfactorily completed at least two years of studies at the College. 5. They shall deliver a sermon at the Classis and shall be interrogated on Reformed doctrine. 6. . . . Permission shall be given for a period not exceeding twelve months, and that under the condition that the student shall submit his sermons to and discuss them with the Lecturer in the Diaconological department at our College.”
- e. At Synod Toronto 1974, art. 171, the churches agreed to extend the course of study at the College to four years instead of three by adding a propaedeutic year, for the sake of lightening the load of learning in the following three years and ensuring a stronger training in the biblical languages. Since then, the “two years” of Synod 1971, art. 76 was understood (correctly) to require “three years” of study.
- f. The students at CRTS have twice in recent years (2012 and 2016) drawn up proposals for the faculty requesting that a way be made for the students to be able, if they pass the requisite ecclesiastical exams, to speak an edifying word in the churches after two years of CRTS education rather than waiting for three years;
- g. The faculty of CRTS have studied this question in depth and have concluded that they support granting M.Div. students at CRTS an earlier license to speak an edifying word in the churches, provided certain principles are maintained;
- h. The United Reformed Church consistories frequently grant licensure to their ministerial students after only one year of seminary. Typically, such students attend seminaries that have a three-year program, but CRTS has now had two students from the URCNA, both of whom were granted licensure by their churches after completing one year at CRTS. CRTS ~~rejoices to be~~ *enjoys being* of service to the URCNA, but the faculty have also noted the disparity that this earlier licensure creates between CanRC and URC students. The faculty members also have not noticed any detrimental effect on the URC students; just the opposite, their added experience in preaching deepened and widened their exegetical skills, improved their preaching, and sharpened their contributions to class discussions about the practical aspects of ministry. CRTS faculty members have consistently observed the same improvements for most CanRC students after their full- summer internships between the third and fourth years of seminary.
- i. Reformed churches in the past have taken a variety of approaches to practice preaching by theological students. In particular, the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century and following allowed their theological students to deliver practice sermons (*proponeren*) in the worship services, provided they had sustained the requisite ecclesiastical exam.
- j. The Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) of 2010 was “provisionally adopted” by Synod 2010 as the Church Order of a united federation of the CanRC and URCNA, should such a federation be formed (*Acts of General Synod of the CanRC 2010*, art. 151). Synod 2010 received letters of concern from the churches about article 4 of the PJCO, which would permit licensure after only one year of seminary studies. The synod, in its considerations, stated that the Church Order Subcommittee “should give serious consideration to raising the minimum requirement to two years before granting licensure to exhort” (art. 151, 3.3).

- k. In the Freshman Year at CRTS, students receive a homiletics course which takes them through all the steps from Scripture text to sermon. They deliver their first sermon at the end of the course in the presence of their fellow freshmen. These students also attend the Sermon Session class every week for two hours. After their first year is completed they undergo an internship orientation of two weeks in which their minister-mentor requires them to write two sermon outlines and sometimes asks them to write them out fully as sermons. In their second year at CRTS students enter the three-year rotation of curriculum. They write and deliver three sermons in the Sermon Session class. Thus, by the end of their second year at CRTS they will have written at least four sermons and possibly as many as six. They will also have observed the professors give feedback on dozens of sermons prepared by their more senior fellow students. Further, the Senate of CRTS decided on 20 June 2017 that from now on the January Interim Semester will include a sermon-making workshop every year. This will increase student exposure to sermon preparation.
- l. Since the second course in homiletics at CRTS occurs once every three years, the likelihood that a student at CRTS has taken this course increases by 33% per year in each of the last three years of training. Thus, they are *likelier* to have taken this course after three years of seminary training (the current time when licensure may be sought) than after two years, but in neither case is it certain that they will have taken this course.
- m. In the Freshman Year at CRTS, M.Div. students memorize all of the Heidelberg Catechism as well as outlines of all the contents of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort. They also receive lectures on the history and contents of these Reformed symbols. In addition, they are introduced to Old Testament exegesis and Reformed hermeneutics. In their second year of studies, students will cover two of the six *loci* of dogmatics in depth, and will take one or more courses in scriptural exegesis.
- n. The church of Guelph-Emmanuel has been mandated by General Synod to administer a fund for the Pastoral Training Program. The Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CPTPF) supports churches that receive student interns for up to 12 weeks of funding. They determine the maximum number of weeks of support based upon the Pastoral Training Program's requirement that the student follow an internship for at least 10 weeks, and up to 12.

## **2. Considerations. We have considered that:**

- a. CRTS should, as much as possible, prepare the students in the M.Div. program for the full range of ministerial duties, including training in the practical skills that belong to the ministry of the Word. In all vocations/professions, some practical things can only be learned on the job. This is true of the ministry as well, yet the more preparation one has prior to being ordained, the better. Rates of training vary, and for many men one year of practice preaching and one summer internship is a rather limited time to acquire the practical skills involved in preaching and pastoral ministry. More opportunities for such training will also give more time for mentoring and guidance. This extra time would be helpful for the students and, in turn, for the churches that they will serve, Lord willing.
- b. The matter of whether students may speak an edifying word is a matter of the churches in common, because it is governed by the Church Order.
  - i. The churches decided in favour of this practice as soon as possible after the formation of our seminary. A proposal to eliminate permission for students to speak an edifying word was received by Synod Toronto 1974, art. 30, and rejected. As far as we know, no synod has ever had to deal with objections to the practice since that time.

- ii. In the last two decades, CRTS has uniformly heard positive feedback from the churches, ministers, and students about the opportunity to speak an edifying word.
  - iii. Given the two purposes mentioned in article 21 of the CO for students of theology speaking an edifying word, it would not normally be suitable to have students provide pulpit supply to vacant congregations. At least, the student needs an active mentor to guide him.
- c. Article 21 of the Church Order shows that the churches did not see fit to stipulate in the Church Order itself the timing of granting a license to speak an edifying word, but rather spoke of “general ecclesiastical regulations.” Ecclesiastical regulations are more easily subject to change than the Church Order itself; for example, a Classis or Synod is free to change its own regulations, as is a local church free to change its “adopted regulations” for electing office bearers, which are mentioned in the CO, art. 3.
- d. The decision of Synod New Westminster 1971 to permit the speaking of an edifying word only after a student has completed two full years of theological training ought to be regarded as a “general ecclesiastical regulation” which the churches may change if good grounds for the change can be provided. Yet, because this regulation was put in place by a general synod, changing it should only occur when all the churches meet together—via those who are delegated—in a general synod. Synod 1971 did not provide reasons why two years of study were needed rather than one, so a proposal for changing these regulations does not need to address any material from Synod 1971 on this point.
- e. When in 1974 the churches extended the course of study at their Theological College, they did not make any further decisions as to how this might affect the timing for speaking an edifying word. However, the wording of the decision made it clear that the added year was propaedeutic to the rest, and thus the conclusion that the students were to wait until after three years of study rather than two was a correct conclusion. Synod 1974’s concern was that students receive a better grounding in the languages of Holy Scripture and that their study load for the following three years would be lightened. These concerns do not directly pertain to whether students should have two or three years of training in the M.Div. program before practice preaching. Also, the curriculum at CRTS has undergone development towards an earlier preparation for preaching. It seems, then, that there are no reasons from the decision in 1974 which would impede a proposal for an earlier licensure.
- f. It is clear that many of the M.Div. students at CRTS have desired the opportunity to grow in their sermon preparation skills by preparing more sermons under the guidance of their professors and mentor-ministers. But there is no further room in the curriculum of CRTS to effect this; therefore, the summer months when students typically work in other vocations would be suitable to learn more about sermon preparation, through practice.
- g. It is helpful to know that those who train our students for the ministry support an earlier licensure, anticipating that it will enhance the academic and practical training given at CRTS (indeed, the present proposal began life as part of a Strategic Planning Initiative of the Board of Governors and faculty of CRTS). Earlier licensure appears to have been a benefit for the URC students at CRTS and can be expected to benefit the CanRC students as well.
- h. While the churches are not bound to any particular past practices, it is important that the churches together regulate admission to the pulpit and maintain a suitable ecclesiastical procedure for granting permission to speak an edifying word. Regulating such practices falls within the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical classes, not the seminary.

- i. The willingness of the churches to consider granting licensure after the second year of studies at CRTS was present at Synod 2010, apart from a proposal that focused on this point. This suggests that the churches would be willing to support a worked-out proposal for earlier licensure.
- j. Students at CRTS receive sufficient training in sermon writing to be able to work under a mentor in one of the churches after two years of seminary studies (provided they sustain the requisite ecclesiastical exam). Whereas the first year of training alone should not be considered sufficient for a full-summer internship, two years of training appears to be sufficient.
- k. Since in the present structure, wherein licensure may only be granted after three years of theological study, students at CRTS have not necessarily received their second course in homiletics by the time they may seek permission to speak an edifying word, the absence or presence of this course is not pertinent to whether permission is granted after their second or third year.
- l. Students at CRTS should be considered, after two years of study, to have taken enough coursework in both the exegesis of Holy Scripture and the doctrines of the church to be able to work fruitfully under a mentor for a summer internship (it is understood that such readiness will vary by student, that CRTS faculty will make recommendations to each student as appropriate, and that Classis will judge the student's readiness at the examination to speak an edifying word).
- m. Students who receive permission to speak an edifying word should follow a full-summer internship in the summer immediately following their exam at Classis (whether after second or third year). The seminary program, however, requires and arranges only one summer internship and the CPTPF funds just one internship. This requirement, arrangement, and funding should remain as they are. If students who have already interned after their second year wish to pursue an additional summer internship after their third year, financing should not be arranged via the CPTPF, but by the church or churches involved, who will liaise directly with the student. We envision two main options below, (i) or (ii), with various possibilities emerging under (iii) as to the circumstances under which *additional* internships might be arranged (the list of possibilities is neither exhaustive nor normative, only suggestive):
  - i. Full summer internship after 2<sup>nd</sup> year, with church assisted by CPTPF. Two- to three- week mission internship after 3<sup>rd</sup> year (these are not funded by the church federation). Additional, optional internship opportunities arranged by local churches and the student.
  - ii. Two- to three-week mission internship after 2<sup>nd</sup> year, without licensure (these are not funded by the church federation). Full summer internship after 3<sup>rd</sup> year, with church assisted by CPTPF. If desirable, additional internship opportunities may be arranged by local churches and the student after the 4<sup>th</sup> year.
  - iii. *Additional* internships, beyond what is required by the CRTS program, do not need to be quite as closely overseen by a local minister-mentor and thus might involve pulpit supply for vacant churches, churches whose minister is on sabbatical, churches simply needing extra help, two or three churches working together and each benefiting from the student's practice preaching, or even assistance in one or another mission, evangelism, or church planting projects. In any case, the student's sermons would still need approval prior to preaching. We envision that the benefits will be mutual—the student will grow in ability while the churches or mission works will be assisted. As noted, this list of possibilities is neither exhaustive nor normative, only suggestive.

### **3. Recommendations: We recommend:**

- a. That as part of the “general ecclesiastical regulations” of article 21 of the Church Order, the churches grant their students for the ministry the opportunity to come before a classis after they have completed two years of study in the M.Div. degree, in order to seek permission to speak an edifying word.
- b. That this permission or licensure be granted under the following conditions:
  - i. That the student present a letter to classis from CRTS that he has successfully completed two years of studies in an approved M.Div. program;
  - ii. That the student sustain an appropriate ecclesiastical exam and supply whatever documents the classis may require;
  - iii. That the student desire to enter gospel ministry, if called to such by the churches.
  - iv. That in the summer immediately following classical permission or licensure—whether this be after the student’s second or third year of studies—the student must complete a summer internship during which he will work under a particular minister or ministers who will serve as his mentor or mentors and will approve his practice sermons prior to delivery (i.e., the licensure is initially not to be regarded as a broad permission to access all pulpits or to provide pulpit supply to vacant churches, but first of all to undergo practical training);
  - v. That the mentor write a report for the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS regarding the student’s progress and his suitability for ministry, while the elders, as well as any minister or seminary professors present for the student’s practice preaching, submit evaluations of the student’s preaching and leading of the worship services to the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS;
  - vi. That the license to speak an edifying word be valid for 12 months, ordinarily renewable twice if a written request is made by the student to the same classis which granted him licensure, before the 12-month period elapses;
  - vii. That during the academic year that follows a summer internship, CRTS students who have received permission to speak an edifying word be expected to discuss with their mentors on the CRTS faculty whether and how much to honour requests from the churches to lead the worship services and speak an edifying word (so that their mentor at CRTS may assist them with advice towards maintaining school and family obligations).
  - viii. That all other regulations remain in place, such as that new practice sermons made outside of the internship periods and before a student graduates from CRTS be subject to approval by the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS.
- c. That General Synod mandate the CPTPF:
  - i. to continue with its present mandate by funding one full-summer internship for each M.Div. student of CRTS who aspires to ministry in the CanRCs, whether the internship occurs after the second or third year of a student’s studies at CRTS.

**ADOPTED**

#### 8.4.2.2 Overture – Lord Supper Form

To: General Synod Edmonton Immanuel 2019  
Re: Changes to Lord's Supper Form

November 15, 2018

Esteemed brothers,

Regional Synod East, meeting in Burlington Ebenezer on November 14, 2018, adopted the following Article. Herewith I pass it on to you for inclusion on the agenda of the forthcoming Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

C Bouwman,  
Clerk *at the time*

### **Article 9 – Overture re Lord's Supper Form**

The committee appointed to deal with the subject of amending the Lord's Supper Form presented their proposal. After discussion the following was adopted:

#### **Material**

1. Overture from CCO re: Revising the Forms for Celebration of the Lord's Supper
2. Letters from the following churches: Dunnville, Fergus North, Elora and Lincoln.

#### **Observations**

1. Regional Synod November 14, 2018 has received an overture from Classis Central Ontario Sept 6–7, 2018 which recommends General Synod 2019 to “revise the Forms for Celebration of the Lord's Supper by replacing gender specific pronouns intended to include both genders with gender inclusive pronouns.”
2. CCO offers the following reasons for this proposal:
  - a. “The English language has changed, and the use of the masculine pronoun to refer to both genders has become linguistically inaccurate.
  - b. “The masculine pronouns in the forms for Lord Supper make them liable to misinterpretation, given the current usage of the English language.”
  - c. “Historically the Reformed Church since the Reformation has insisted that the language of the worship services be in the vernacular.”
  - d. “For Canadian Reformed worship services to speak meaningfully and accurately to our culture, it is necessary to eschew all possible misinterpretation and misunderstanding.”
  - e. In a supporting document, CCO adds the following argumentation:
    - i. The forms for Lord's Supper “employ an archaic usage of gender specific third person pronouns (i.e., “he,” “his,” “him,” and “himself” to refer to persons irrespective of gender. . . .This convention is no longer acceptable in contemporary

English usage, and, moreover, has assumed connotations of gender exclusivity and inequality.”

- ii. “Furthermore, this archaic grammatical convention compromises our witness to Biblical teaching about gender identity and equality before God; it also introduces an unnecessary distinction among those called to Lord’s Supper, where the language of our liturgy ought instead to encourage unity and heartfelt engagement in worship.”
  - iii. “Over the last half century gender-neutral usage of the masculine singular has come to represent an older world, in which women were viewed as being secondary in ability, mental capacity, legal rights, and whatever might be considered the qualities of a complete, perfect human being. This view of women is one Christians ought to repudiate.”
  - iv. “When we are explaining God’s distinct callings for male and female, “he” and “she” ought not to be blurred (as the world would have them), and when we are describing God’s loving relationship with those He has made His children, neither “he” nor “she” ought to receive special honour. It is in the latter manner that the gender-specific terms of the Form for Lord’s Supper undermine the clarity of the church’s teaching on gender identity.”
  - v. “The forms can potentially undermine our unity at the Lord’s table in two ways. First, it can do so implicitly, by subtly leading worshippers to suppose that the model believer is a man. . . . It is left up to the Christian woman to exercise her discernment, interpret the language of the Form, and recognize that the righteousness of Christ is applied to her too, as if she herself had fulfilled all righteousness.”
  - vi. “The forms for Lord’s Supper are liable to undermine the clarity of the church’s teaching more explicitly, by adhering to a gendered grammar whose meaning has shifted since our liturgical forms were first adopted.” The older forms (like the masculine singular) are interpreted by our society as “instances of a social structure that unjustly values some persons over others.”
  - vii. The Lord’s Supper forms are “unique among our liturgical forms” as the others all use masculine and feminine pronouns appropriately.
3. CCO suggests that there are three main approaches “that an editor might take to revise the gender-exclusive pronouns of the Lord’s Supper” forms: 1) using “they”; 2) avoiding the pronoun altogether; 3) using “you.” CCO recommends using the third method.

### **Considerations**

1. While there is no doubt that the English language has changed, it is far from certain that the use of the masculine pronoun to refer to both genders “has become linguistically inaccurate” in our time. The churches at Lincoln and Elora rightly point out that the translation of the Bible recommended for use in our churches (the ESV, last updated in 2016) does still use this convention and even does so in the passage related to the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:28,29). As a federation, it would behoove us to carefully consider the proposed linguistic changes in light of their consistency with the Bible translation most commonly in use.
2. It may be true that the masculine pronouns in the forms for Lord’s Supper make them liable to misinterpretation. It is a long-standing Reformed principle that the language of the worship services be in the vernacular. It is also desirable to eschew all possible misinterpretation and

misunderstanding. These are compelling reasons to consider changing the pronouns as proposed, as also the churches at Dunnville, Fergus North, and Lincoln express.

3. The “supporting document” does not add much if any compelling argumentation. Indeed, as several churches explain, the arguments rooted in feministic, anti-patriarchal reasoning are questionable if not outright objectionable. As Elora points out, if we were to accept the underlying premise that the convention of single masculine pronouns being used to represent both genders “has assumed connotations of gender exclusivity and inequality,” and that “this archaic grammatical convention compromises our witness to Biblical teaching about gender identity and equality before God,” then we would be forced to conclude that Scripture itself is complicit in promoting gender exclusivity and inequality.
4. The phrasing “gender inclusive” and “gender inclusive pronoun” in the body of the overture are problematic in that they bring to mind the questionable rationale of the supporting document. It would be better to either remove or replace them with other words which do not carry that baggage.
5. The wisdom and appropriateness of whether to change the pronouns in the Form for Lord’s Supper as well as how to make such a change needs careful consideration. Classis Central Ontario presents three plausible options. It would be fitting if the SCBP was mandated to study this matter and come with a recommendation to the churches in its report to a subsequent general synod.

## **Recommendation**

That Regional Synod decide:

1. To amend the overture as follows:

### **Overture Regarding Revision of Forms for Celebration of the Lord’s Supper**

Classis Central Ontario of Sept. 6-7, 2018 overtures the 2018 Regional Synod East to overture the 2019 General Synod to revise the Forms for Celebration of the Lord’s Supper by replacing gender specific pronouns intended to include both genders with pronouns that overtly include both genders where it is appropriate.

### **Observations:**

1. The English language has changed, and the use of the masculine pronoun to refer to both genders has become linguistically inaccurate.
2. The masculine pronouns in the forms for Lord Supper make them liable to misinterpretation, given the current usage of the English language.

### **Considerations:**

1. Historically the Reformed Church since the Reformation has insisted that the language of the worship services be in the vernacular. For example, the Reformation Bible translators insisted on using the common language of the people.
2. For Canadian Reformed worship services to speak meaningfully and with unambiguous clarity to our society, it is necessary to eschew all possible misinterpretation and misunderstanding. For example, many of our contemporaries would understand masculine pronouns to exclude women. If a minister were to begin his sermon with, “Brothers in the Lord Jesus...” this would be considered inappropriate.

**Recommendations:**

That General Synod Edmonton 2019 revise the forms for Lord Supper to use pronouns which overtly include both genders where that it is appropriate.

2. To forward the amended overture to General Synod Edmonton 2019 minus the supporting document and along with the entire decision of this Regional Synod East.

ADOPTED

## 8.5 Appeals

9. Appointments

10. Censure *ad* Article 34 CO

11. Publication of the Acts

12. Financial Matters

13. Preparation for next General Synod

14. Adoption of the Acts

15. Approval of the Press Release

16. Closing