



ACTS

of

General Synod 2019

of the

Canadian Reformed Churches

held at

Edmonton, Alberta

from

May 14-23, 2019

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Executive: P. Holtvliwer (2nd clerk), R.C. Janssen (1st clerk), D. Agema (Chair), J. Louwerse (Vicechair)





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Abbreviations and Nomenclature

When it comes to nomenclature and abbreviations, the practice of the CanRC over the decades has been quite inconsistent. An attempt to anglicize abbreviations in the recent past faltered. At GS 2016 the following principles were followed:

1. The abbreviation for a subcommittee is the abbreviation of the main committee dash abbreviation of the subcommittee. (E.g. CRCA-SRN, CCU-SCO).
2. Names of churches are shortened to “the PLACE NAME CanRC”. If a church is referred to by further qualifiers, a dash is added to the place name and then the qualifier is added. (E.g. the Aldergrove CanRC, the Neerlandia-(North) CanRC, the Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC, the Tintern-Spring Creek CanRC).
3. Other church federations are referred to by their name in English. The abbreviation used is the one used in the language of origin. (E.g. The Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ), The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv)).
4. References to acts of general synods are according to the following formula: GS YEAR Art. ### Obs./Cons./Rec. ##. If there is potential for confusing synods, the denominational acronym is added to GS (e.g. GS-GKv 2017 = the general synod of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands held in 2017; GS-CanRC 2019 = the general synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches held in 2019).

Because various abbreviations have been used over the years, the following list has the most common English and language of origin abbreviations, with notes where church federations have changed names in the course of time.

The following list attempts to cover the abbreviations used in the *Acts* of GS 2019, GS 2016, and GS 2013.

Language of origin	English equivalent	Spelled out
ARC	<i>ARC</i>	American Reformed Church (part of the federation of CanRC)
ARPC	<i>ARPC</i>	Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
ARTS	<i>ARTS</i>	Association of Reformed Theological Schools
ATS	<i>ATS</i>	Association of Theological Schools
BBK	<i>RCA</i>	<i>Betrekkingen met Buitenlandse Kerken</i> (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of a Dutch church federation)
BC	<i>BC</i>	Belgic Confession
BoG	<i>BoG</i>	Board of Governors (of CRTS)
CA	<i>CA</i>	Classis Alberta
CanRC	<i>CanRC</i>	Canadian Reformed Church(es)
CanRCs	<i>CanRCs</i>	Multiple Canadian Reformed Churches

Language of origin	<i>English equivalent</i>	Spelled out
CBT	<i>CBT</i>	Committee on Bible Translations (for the CanRC)
CBTNIV	<i>CBTNIV</i>	Committee on Bible Translation for the New International Version (of the Bible)
CCCNA	<i>CCCNA</i>	CCCNA Committee for Contact with Churches in North America
CCO	<i>CCO</i>	Classis Central Ontario
CCU	<i>CCU</i>	Committee for Church Unity
CCU-C	<i>CCU-C</i>	Committee for Church Unity - Coordinators
CCU-SCO	<i>CCU-SCO</i>	Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for Church Order
CCU-STE	<i>CCU-STE</i>	Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for Theological Education
CEIR	<i>CEIR</i>	Committee on Ecumenical and Interchurch Relations (of the OPC)
CERCU	<i>CERCU</i>	Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (of the URCNA)
CGKN	<i>CRCN</i>	<i>Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i> (Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands)
CICR	<i>CICR</i>	Committee on Inter-Church Relations (of the ERQ)
CM	<i>CM</i>	Classis Manitoba
CNSF	<i>CNSF</i>	Committee for Needy Students' Fund
CN	<i>CN</i>	Classis Niagara
CO	<i>CO</i>	Church Order
COW	<i>COW</i>	Classis Ontario West
CPE	<i>CPE</i>	Classis Pacific East
CPW	<i>CPW</i>	Classis Pacific West
CPTPF	<i>CPTPF</i>	Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding
CRCA	<i>CRCA</i>	Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (of the CanRC)
CRCA-SRN	<i>CRCA-SRN</i>	Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad – Subcommittee on relations with churches in The Netherlands
CRCAus	<i>CRCAus</i>	Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
CRCNA	<i>CRCNA</i>	Christian Reformed Church in North America

Language of origin	English equivalent	Spelled out
CRTs	<i>CRTS</i>	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
CWeb	<i>CWeb</i>	Committee for the Official Website (of the CanRC)
EF	<i>EF</i>	Ecclesiastical Fellowship
ERQ	<i>RCQ</i>	Reformed Church of Quebec / Église Réformée du Québec
ERQ	<i>RCQ</i>	<i>Église Réformée du Québec</i> (Reformed Church of Quebec)
ESV	<i>ESV</i>	English Standard Version (of the Bible)
FCC	<i>FCC</i>	Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
FCS	<i>FCS</i>	Free Church of Scotland
FERC	<i>FERC</i>	First Evangelical Reformed Church (Singapore)
FRCA	<i>FRCA</i>	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCNA	<i>FRCNA</i>	Free Reformed Churches of North America
FRCSA	<i>FRCSA</i>	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (English is now the preferred language; previously also known as VGKSA)
GGRC	<i>CRCI</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia)
GGRI	<i>RCI</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia)
GGRI-KalBar	<i>RCI-KalBar</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Kalimantan Barat</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Kalimantan Barat)
GGRI-NTT	<i>RCI-NTT</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timur</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur)
GGRI-Papua	<i>RCI-Papua</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Papua</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Papua)
GGRI-Timor	<i>RCI-Timor</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Timor</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia on the island of Timor)
GKH DGK	<i>RCR</i> <i>TRC</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken – Hersteld</i> (Reformed Churches – Restored) – renamed <i>De Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (The Reformed Churches)

Language of origin	English equivalent	Spelled out
GKNvv GKN	<i>RCNtf</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (voorlopig verband)</i> – Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (temporary federation) Renamed: “ <i>Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland</i> ”
GKSA	<i>RCSA</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika</i> (Reformed Churches in South Africa aka “Dopper Kerken”)
GKv	<i>RCN</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – vrijgemaakt</i> (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – liberated)
HC	<i>HC</i>	Heidelberg Catechism
HRC	<i>HRC</i>	Heritage Reformed Congregations
ICRC	<i>ICRC</i>	International Conference of Reformed Churches
IPB	<i>PCB</i>	<i>Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil</i> (Presbyterian Church of Brazil)
IRB	<i>RCB</i>	<i>Igrejas Reformadas do Brazil</i> (Reformed Churches in Brazil)
IRC	<i>IRC</i>	Inter-church Relations Committee (of the RPCNA)
IRCK	<i>IRCK</i>	Independent Reformed Church in Korea
KJV	<i>KJV</i>	King James Version (of the Bible)
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
NASB	<i>NASB</i>	New American Standard Bible
NGK	<i>NRC</i>	<i>Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (Netherlands Reformed Churches)
NIV/NIV84	<i>NIV/NIV84</i>	New International Version – 1984 Edition (of the Bible)
NIV2011	<i>NIV2011</i>	New International Version – 2011 Edition (of the Bible)
NKJV	<i>NKJV</i>	New King James Version (of the Bible)
NRSV	<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version (of the Bible)
OPC	<i>OPC</i>	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCA	<i>PCA</i>	Presbyterian Church in America

Language of origin	<i>English equivalent</i>	Spelled out
PHC	<i>PHC</i>	Psalter-Hymnal Committee (of the URCNA)
PJCO	<i>PJCO</i>	Proposed Joint Church Order (for a merged CanRC & URCNA)
PNG	<i>PNG</i>	Papua New Guinea
PRCA	<i>PRCA</i>	Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia
PTP	<i>PTP</i>	Pastoral Training Program (of CRTS)
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
RPCNA	<i>RPCNA</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
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 Publication of the <i>Book of Praise</i>
SIP	<i>SIP</i>	Statement of Institutional Purpose (of the CRTS)
SRN	<i>SRN</i>	Subcommittee on relations with churches in The Netherlands (subcommittee of the CRCA)
TPH	<i>TPH</i>	<i>Trinity Psalter-Hymnal</i> (of the URCNA and OPC)
TUK	<i>TUK</i>	<i>Theologische Universiteit Kampen</i> (Theological University in Kampen (of the RCN))
URCNA	<i>URCNA</i>	United Reformed Churches in North America

Day 1 — Morning Session
Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Article 1 – Opening of Synod

On behalf of the convening church, the Rev. Julius VanSpronsen called the meeting to order. He welcomed all present, especially the delegates to GS 2019. He requested all who were present to sing Psalm 99:1,2,3 and then read 1 Timothy 6:11-21. After speaking some words on this passage (see Appendix 1), he had the assembly sing Psalm 124 and then led in prayer. He spoke some words of introduction on the city of Edmonton, the Canadian Reformed Churches and NAPARC churches in the area, as well as information regarding pertinent logistics.

Article 2 – Credentials

The credentials were examined by the Edmonton-Immanuel CanRC and found to be in good order. Twenty-two primary delegates and two alternate delegates were present and signed the attendance list.

Delegated by Regional Synod West November 2018:

Ministers: Dr. Roelf (Karlo) Janssen, Dr. Andrew Pol, Joe Poppe, James Slaa, Julius VanSpronsen, Bill Wielenga.

Elders: John DeHaas, Ken Huttema, Casey Leyenhorst, Harry Moes, Henry Schouten, Bert Vane.

Delegated by Regional Synod East November 2018:

Ministers: Douwe Agema, Clarence Bouwman, Peter Feenstra, Peter Holtvlüwer, John Louwerse, Clarence VanderVelde.

Elders: Ron Bremer (alt.) John Jager, Jeff Jans (alt.), Bernie Kottelenberg, Fred Stoffels, Dr. Art Witten.

Article 3 – Election of Officers

The following officers were elected to serve Synod for its duration:

Chairman: D. Agema

Vice-chairman: J. Louwerse

First Clerk: R.C. Janssen

Second Clerk: P. Holtvlüwer

Article 4 – Constitution of Synod

On behalf of the convening church, the Rev. VanSpronsen declared Synod constituted. The elected officers took their places. The Rev. Agema thanked the assembly for the confidence expressed in the elected officers of Synod. He expressed appreciation to the convening church for all the work done in preparation for Synod. The chairman then called for a break to give the executive the opportunity to come with proposals regarding the proceedings of Synod and the division of tasks among the various members of Synod.

Synod was adjourned until 2pm.

Day 1 — Afternoon Session
Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Article 5 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Hymn 80:1,2. He read the roll and noted all synod members were present.

Article 6 – Housekeeping Matters

The executive presented recommendations on housekeeping matters. Synod decided the following:

1. *Presence on the Internet*: Synod will publish the *Acts of Synod* on the federation website as they become available. However, as the *Acts* are adopted, Synod will decide whether there are any decisions which should not be immediately posted on the Internet. Confidential acts will not be posted.
2. *Privileges of the floor*: Synod will give the floor to all official representatives of churches with whom the CanRC are in ecclesiastical fellowship.
3. *Time Schedule*: Monday to Friday
morning session – 9:00 - 12:00
afternoon session – 2:00 - 5:00
evening session – 7:00 - 9:00
4. *Devotions*: Synod shall begin and close each day in plenary session with Scripture reading, prayer and singing. A schedule will be handed out.
5. *Press Release*: A press release shall be published after synod has been closed.
6. *Committees*: Advisory committees shall submit their proposals via email to the first clerk before they are dealt with in plenary session. The first clerk will ensure distribution.
7. *Synod Documents*: Copies of synod documents are available only to members of synod and fraternal delegates. Officially delegated observers will receive all non-confidential materials.
8. *Guidelines*: For all procedures the Guidelines for Synod shall apply.
9. *Travel expenses*: Expenses are to be submitted, with receipts, to br. Rob Duker.
10. *Roll call*: Roll call shall take place each plenary session by means of a visual check by the executive.
11. *Advisory Committee Reports*: Advisory Committee reports shall be submitted to the first clerk using the template provided.

Article 7 – Late Submissions

Regarding late submissions the executive recommended the following:

1. That letters from the churches interacting with the submissions from Hamilton-Blessings CanRC (8.6.7 & 8.6.8) be declared admissible, since the Hamilton-Blessings CanRC submitted them near the deadline.

ADOPTED

Article 8 – Agenda

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 Delegates to GS 2019 – RSW Nov 2018 dd. Nov. 9, 2018
 - 8.1.2 Nomination for Board of Governors – RSW Nov 2018 dd. Nov. 14, 2018
 - 8.1.3 Delegates to GS 2019 – RSE Nov. 2018 dd. Nov. 15, 2018
 - 8.1.4 Nomination for Board of Governors – RSE Nov. 2018 dd. Nov. 15, 2018
 - 8.2 Committee Reports
 - 8.2.1 Synod Guidelines
 - 8.2.1.1 Synod Guidelines – GS 2016 Executive
 - 8.2.2 Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA & CRCA-SRN)
 - 8.2.2.1 Churches Abroad
 - 8.2.2.2 DGK – CRCA-SRN
 - 8.2.2.3 GKN – CRCA-SRN
 - 8.2.2.4 GKv – CRCA-SRN
 - 8.2.2.5 GKN sister church request – CRCA-SRN
 - 8.2.2.6 Ecclesiastical contact with DGK Marienberg - DGK Marienberg
 - 8.2.2.7 Combined mandate CCCNA & CRCA – CRCA & CCCNA dd. Mar. 7, 2019
 - 8.2.2.8 Letter regarding CRCA report on RCK – RCK dd. Mar. 8, 2019
 - 8.2.2.9 Letter regarding CRCA report on RCK – CRCA dd. Mar. 15, 2019
 - 8.2.2.10 Nominations CRCA – CRCA
 - 8.2.2.11 Letter of greetings from GGRI
 - 8.2.2.12 Letter of greetings from DGK
 - 8.2.3 Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA)
 - 8.2.3.1 Churches in North America
 - 8.2.4 Committee for Church Unity (CCU)
 - 8.2.4.1 URCNA – CCU-C
 - 8.2.4.2 URCNA Church Order – CCU-SCO
 - 8.2.4.3 URCNA Theological Education – CCU-STE
 - 8.2.5 Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP)
 - 8.2.5.1 *Book of Praise* – SCBP
 - 8.2.5.2 Nominations – SCBP
 - 8.2.6 Archives
 - 8.2.6.1 Inspection of Archives – Burlington-Rehoboth
 - 8.2.7 Board of Governors (BoG)

- 8.2.7.1 CRTS
- 8.2.7.2 Nomination letter for non-minister governor
- 8.2.7.3 Letter regarding new professor New Testament
- 8.2.8 Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CPTPF)
 - 8.2.8.1 Pastoral Training Program Funding– Guelph-Emmanuel
- 8.2.9 Committee for Bible Translation (CBT)
 - 8.2.9.1 Bible Translation - CBT
- 8.2.10 Committee for the Official Website (CWeb)
 - 8.2.10.1 General Report - CWeb
 - 8.2.10.2 Nominations - CWeb
 - 8.2.10.3 Finances - CWeb
- 8.2.11 Committee for the Needy Students' Fund
 - 8.2.11.1 Committee for the Needy Students' Fund – Grassie-Covenant
- 8.2.12 Days of Prayer
 - 8.2.12.1 Days of Prayer Report – Burlington-Rehoboth & Edmonton-Providence
 - 8.2.12.2 Days of Prayer – Supplemental report dd. Nov. 17, 2018
- 8.2.13. General Fund
 - 8.2.13.1 General Fund – Carman-East – Report
 - 8.2.13.2 General Fund – Carman-West CanRC – Review
- 8.3 Letters from the Churches regarding the reports
 - 8.3.1 Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)
 - 8.3.1.1 The Netherlands
 - 8.3.1.1.1 GKv – Guelph-Emmanuel dd. Feb. 4, 2019
 - 8.3.1.1.2 DGK – Flamborough-Redemption dd. Feb. 16, 2019
 - 8.3.1.1.3 GKv – Flamborough-Redemption dd. Feb. 16, 2019
 - 8.3.1.1.4 GKN – Flamborough-Redemption dd. Feb. 16, 2019
 - 8.3.1.1.5 GKv – Fergus-North dd. Feb. 25, 2019
 - 8.3.1.1.6 GKv – Hamilton-Cornerstone dd. Mar. 7, 2019
 - 8.3.1.1.7 GKv – Houston dd. Mar. 13, 2019
 - 8.3.1.1.8 General – Carman-West dd. Feb. 18, 2019
 - 8.3.1.1.9 GKv – Burlington-Ebenezer Mar. 18, 2019
 - 8.3.1.1.10 GKv – Barrhead n.d.
 - 8.3.1.1.11 GKv – Winnipeg-Grace dd. Mar. 21, 2019
 - 8.3.1.1.12 GKv – Orangeville dd. Mar. 30, 2019
 - 8.3.1.2 GGRI-Timor – Smithville dd. Feb. 4, 2019
 - 8.3.1.3 IRCK – Smithville dd. Feb. 4, 2019
 - 8.3.1.4 RCK – Smithville dd. Feb. 4, 2019
 - 8.3.1.5 GGRC – Smithville dd. Feb. 4, 2019
 - 8.3.1.6 GGRC – Lincoln-Vineyard dd. Mar. 9, 2019
 - 8.3.1.7 IRCK – Hamilton-Cornerstone dd. Mar. 7, 2019
 - 8.3.1.8 General – Burlington-Rehoboth dd. Mar. 20, 2019
 - 8.3.1.9 General – Attercliffe dd. Mar 28, 2019

- 8.3.2 Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA)
 - 8.3.2.1 General – Dunnville dd. Dec. 18, 2018
 - 8.3.2.2 FRCNA – Lincoln-Vineyard dd. Mar. 9, 2019
 - 8.3.2.3 HRC – Lincoln-Vineyard dd. Mar. 9, 2019
 - 8.3.2.4 CRCA&CCCNA – Toronto-Bethel dd. Mar. 17, 2019
 - 8.3.2.5 HRC – Toronto-Bethel dd. Mar. 17, 2019
 - 8.3.2.6 General – Attercliffe dd. Mar. 28, 2019
 - 8.3.2.7 EF rules & tiered relationships - Grassie-Covenant dd. Mar. 27, 2019
 - 8.3.2.8 CRCA&CCCNA – Tintern Spring Creek dd. Feb. 20, 2019
 - 8.3.2.9 PCA – Flamborough-Redemption dd. Feb. 16, 2019
- 8.3.3 Committee for Church Unity (CCU) – regarding URCNA
 - 8.3.3.1 General – Winnipeg-Redeemer dd. Jan. 14, 2019
 - 8.3.3.2 General – Barrhead n.d.
 - 8.3.3.3 General – Attercliffe dd. Mar. 28, 2019
 - 8.3.3.4 General – Lynden dd. Mar. 17, 2019
- 8.3.4 Board of Governors (BoG) of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS)
 - 8.3.4.1 General – Willoughby Heights dd. Feb. 18, 2019
 - 8.3.4.2 Principal appointment – Coaldale n.d.
 - 8.3.4.3 Principal appointment – Toronto-Bethel dd. Mar. 13, 2019
 - 8.3.4.4 Changes to By-Laws and Handbook – Brampton-Grace dd. Mar. 27, 2019
- 8.3.5 Committee for Bible Translations (CBT)
 - 8.3.5.1 Mandate – Willoughby Heights dd. Feb. 18, 2019
 - 8.3.5.2 NIV2011 – Fergus-North dd. Feb. 25, 2019
 - 8.3.5.3 General – Attercliffe dd. Mar. 28, 2019
 - 8.3.5.4 General – Grassie-Covenant dd. Mar. 27, 2019
- 8.3.6 Committee for the Needy Students’ Fund (CNSF)
 - 8.3.6.1 Ownership of fund - Willoughby Heights dd. Feb. 18, 2019
- 8.3.7 Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* (SCBP)
 - 8.3.7.1 General – Willoughby Heights Feb. 18, 2019
 - 8.3.7.2 General – Smithville dd. Feb. 4, 2019
 - 8.3.7.3 General – Lincoln-Vineyard dd. Mar. 9, 2019
 - 8.3.7.4 General – Carman-West dd. Feb. 18, 2019
 - 8.3.7.5 General – Ancaster n.d.
 - 8.3.7.6 General – Fergus-Maranatha dd. Mar. 30, 2019
 - 8.3.7.7 General – Aldergrove Mar. 29, 2019
 - 8.3.7.8 Wording of Hymn 1 – Winnipeg-Grace dd. Feb. 14, 2019
- 8.3.8 Committee for the Official Website Report (CWeb)
 - 8.3.8.1 Email services – Burlington-Ebenezer dd. Mar. 18, 2019
 - 8.3.8.2 Email services – Barrhead n.d.
 - 8.3.8.3 Email services – Toronto-Bethel dd. Mar. 17, 2019
 - 8.3.8.4 Email services – Grassie-Covenant dd. Mar. 27, 2019

- 8.3.8.5 Email services – Burlington-Rehoboth n.d.
- 8.3.8.6 Email services – Taber dd. Mar. 27, 2019
- 8.3.8.7 Email services – London-Pilgrim dd. Mar. 21, 2019
- 8.3.8.8 General – Orangeville dd. Apr. 2, 2019

8.4 Overtures

- 8.4.1 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – RSW 2018 – Aldergrove – CPE overture
 - 8.4.1.1 Letter from RSW Nov 2018 re overtures 8.4.1.2, 8.4.2.1 & 8.4.3
 - 8.4.1.2 RSW 2018 19-1.1: Aldergrove – CPE overture
 - 8.4.1.3 RSW 2018 19-1.3: Nooksack Valley submission
 - 8.4.1.4 RSW 2018 19-1.4: Chilliwack submission
 - 8.4.1.5 RSW 2018 19-1.5: Lynden submission
- 8.4.2 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – RSW 2018 (Denver-Emmanuel – CM overture)
 - 8.4.2.1 RSW 2018 19-1.2: Denver-Emmanuel – CM overture
- 8.4.3 Licensure – RSW 2018 (Willoughby Heights – CPW overture)
- 8.4.4 Licensure – RSE Nov. 2018 (Hamilton-Cornerstone – COW overture), appended with:
 - 8.4.4.1 Markings to RSE Nov. 2018 overture
- 8.4.5 Lord Supper forms – RSE Nov. 2018 (Toronto-Bethel – CCO overture)

8.5 Letters from the churches regarding the overtures

- 8.5.1 Lord's Supper forms – Willoughby Heights dd. Feb. 18, 2019
- 8.5.2 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Dunnville dd. Dec. 18, 2018
- 8.5.3 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Elora CanRC dd. Jan. 26, 2019
- 8.5.4 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Fergus-North dd. Feb. 25, 2019
- 8.5.5 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Guelph-Living Word dd. Mar. 11, 2019
- 8.5.6 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Ottawa-Jubilee dd. Mar. 15, 2019
- 8.5.7 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Carman-West dd. Feb. 18, 2019
- 8.5.8 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Burlington-Ebenezer dd. Mar. 18, 2019
- 8.5.9 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Ancaster dd. Mar. 18, 2019
- 8.5.10 Lord's Supper forms – Barrhead n.d.
- 8.5.11 Licensure – Barrhead n.d.
- 8.5.12 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Barrhead n.d.
- 8.5.13 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Hamilton-Cornerstone n.d.
- 8.5.14 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Grand Rapids dd. Mar. 28, 2019
- 8.5.15 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Toronto-Bethel dd. Mar. 13, 2019
- 8.5.16 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Calgary dd. Apr. 1, 2019
- 8.5.17 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Grassie-Covenant dd. Mar. 27, 2019
- 8.5.18 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Burlington-Fellowship dd. Mar. 29, 2019
- 8.5.19 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Glanbrook-Trinity n.d.
- 8.5.20 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Lynden dd. Mar. 13, 2019
- 8.5.21 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Orangeville dd. Mar. 30, 2019
- 8.5.22 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Neerlandia dd. Feb. 11, 2019
- 8.5.23 Lord's Supper forms – Winnipeg-Grace dd. Feb. 14, 2019
- 8.5.24 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Fergus-Maranatha dd. Mar. 30, 2019

- 8.5.25 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – St. Albert dd. Apr. 1, 2019
- 8.5.26 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* – Edmonton-Immanuel dd. Apr. 2, 2019

8.6 Appeals

- 8.6.1 GS 2016 Art. 87 re: GS 2013 Art. 110 (Women Voting)
 - 8.6.1.1 Appeal from Chilliwack dd. Jan. 2, 2019
- 8.6.2 RSE May 2018 Art. 7 (Application of CO Art. 31)
 - 8.6.2.1 Appeal from Orangeville dd. Oct. 17, 2018
- 8.6.3 RSE 2017 Art. 17 (*Trinity Psalter-Hymnal*)
 - 8.6.3.1 Appeal from Burlington-Rehoboth dd. Oct. 1, 2018
 - 8.6.3.2 Appeal from Flamborough-Redemption dd. Feb. 16, 2019, appended with:
 - 8.6.3.2.1 Acts of RSE 2017
 - 8.6.3.2.2 *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* Principles and Guidelines
 - 8.6.3.2.3 SCBP report 2004
 - 8.6.3.3 Appeal from Burlington-Ebenezer dd. Mar. 18, 2019
- 8.6.4 RSE May 2018 Art. 7 (personal)
 - 8.6.4.1 Appeal from T. Bosma, appended with
 - 8.6.4.1.1 Broader Assemblies' Responses
 - 8.6.4.1.2 T. Bosma's Appeal to RSE May 2018
 - 8.6.4.1.3 Letters referenced in appeal to GS 2019
 - 8.6.4.2 Appeal from C. Sloots, appended with
 - 8.6.4.2.1 C. Sloots' Appeal to RSE May 2018
 - 8.6.4.2.2 Broader assemblies' responses
 - 8.6.4.2.3 Letters referenced in appeal to GS 2019
 - 8.6.4.3 From Lincoln-Vineyard regarding br. T. Bosma appeal dd. Apr. 2, 2019
 - 8.6.4.4 From Lincoln-Vineyard regarding C. Sloots appeal dd. Apr. 2, 2019
- 8.6.5 RSW 2017 Art. 5 (remarriage after divorce)
 - 8.6.5.1 Appeal from J & M DeBoer, appended with
 - 8.6.5.1.1 DeBoer appeal to RSW 2017
 - 8.6.5.1.2 RSW 2017 response to appeal
 - 8.6.5.1.3 CPW Apr 2017 response to appeal
 - 8.6.5.1.4 DeBoer appeal to CPW Apr 2017
- 8.6.6 GS 2016 Art. 53 and GS 2013 Art. 62 (admissibility)
 - 8.6.6.1 Appeal from Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford
- 8.6.7 GS 1983 Art. 145 (expression "confessions" in liturgical forms)
 - 8.6.7.1 Request for Revision from Hamilton-Blessings CanRC
 - 8.6.7.1.1 Dunnville dd. Mar. 28, 2019
 - 8.6.7.1.2 Guelph-Emmanuel dd. Apr. 2, 2019
 - 8.6.7.1.3 Grand Rapids dd. Mar. 29, 2019
- 8.6.8 RSE Nov. 2018 Art. 8 (amendment to CO art. 55)
 - 8.6.8.1 Appeal from Hamilton-Blessings dd. Mar. 25, 2019

- 8.6.8.1.1 Interaction with appeal, Grand Rapids dd. Mar. 29, 2019
- 8.6.8.1.2 Interaction with appeal, Lincoln-Vineyard dd. Ap.6, 2019
- 8.6.8.1.3 Interaction with appeal, Chilliwack dd. Apr. 25, 2019
- 8.6.8.1.4 Interaction with appeal, Winnipeg-Redeemer, Mar. 29, 2019
- 8.6.8.1.5 Interaction with appeal, Guelph-Emmanuel dd. Apr. 2, 2019
- 8.6.9 RSW 2018 Art. 5 & 19 (treating an “appeal” as a “submission”)
- 8.6.9.1 Appeal from Chilliwack CanRC dd. Feb. 12, 2019
- 8.6.10 GS 2016 Art. 111 (NIV 2011)
 - 8.6.10.1 Appeal from Neerlandia-(North)
- 8.6.11 RSW 2018 Art. 7 & 18 (personal)
 - 8.6.11.1 Appeal from Neerlandia-(North)
 - 8.6.11.2 Appeal from S. Viersen
- 8.6.12 GS 2016 Art. 103 (confidentiality of the article)
 - 8.6.12.1 Appeal from Tintern Spring Creek, appended with
 - 8.6.12.1.1 GS 2016 Art. 103 Confidential
- 9. Appointments
- 10. Censure as per 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

Article 9 – Advisory Committees

The following advisory committees were appointed:

Committee 1:

C. VanderVelde (convener), P. Feenstra, B. Kottelenberg, J. Jager, F. Stoffels.

Materials: Appeal RSW 2017 Art. 5 (8.6.5); Appeal RSW 2018 Art. 7 & 18 (8.6.11); Appeal GS 2016 Art. 87 (8.6.1); Committee for Bible Translation (8.2.9); Appeal GS 2016 Art. 111 (8.6.10).

Committee 2:

J. Slaa (convener), J. Poppe, H. Moes, K. Huttema, H. Schouten.

Materials: Appeal RSE May 2018 Art. 7 (8.6.2); Appeal RSE May 2018 Art. 7 (8.6.4); Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (8.2.8); Committee for Needy Students’ Fund (8.2.11); Licensure Overture (8.4.3; 8.4.4; 8.5.11).

Committee 3:

C. Bouwman (convener), A.J. Pol, C. Leyenhorst, R. Bremer, B. Vane.

Materials: Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (8.2.2; 8.3.1); Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (8.2.3; 8.3.2); Coordinators for Church Unity; (8.2.4;

8.3.3); Appeal GS 2016 art. 53 and GS 2013 art. 62 (8.6.6); Appeal GS 2016 art. 103 (8.6.12); Committee for the Website (8.2.10; 8.3.8); Appeal RSE Nov. 2018 art. 8 (8.6.8).

Committee 4:

J. VanSpronsen (convener), B. Wielenga, A. Witten, J. Jans, J. DeHaas.

Material: Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* (8.2.5; 8.3.7); *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* Overtures and related materials (8.4.1; 8.4.2; 8.5.2-9,12-22,24-26); Appeal RSE 2017 Art. 17 (8.6.3); Appeal RSW 2018 Art. 5 & 19 (8.6.9); Lord's Supper forms overture (8.4.5; 8.5.1; 8.5.10; 8.5.23).

Committee 5 (executive):

D. Agema (convener/reporter), P. Holtvliwer, R.C. Janssen, J. Louwerse.

Material: Request GS 1983 Art. 145 etc. (8.6.7); Board of Governors (8.1.2; 8.1.4; 8.2.7; 8.3.4); Archives (8.2.6); General Fund (8.2.13); Days of Prayer (8.2.12); Address Church (no report); Appointments (9); Preparation for next synod (13); Synod Guidelines (8.2.1).

Following some final comments from the chairman regarding procedures, seating arrangements, and the evening session, Synod was adjourned for committee work until 8:00pm.

Day 1 — Evening Session
Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Article 10 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Psalm 84:1,2. He noted all synod members were present.

Article 11 – GGRI – Letter of Greetings

The Rev. Janssen read a letter of greeting sent by the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI), declaring gratitude for our relationship and expressing regret at being unable to attend Synod in person on account of lack of funds. The full text of the letter can be found in Appendix 2.

Article 12 – ERQ – Fraternal Delegate Address

The Rev. Feenstra introduced the Rev. Ben Westerveld, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Church in Quebec (ERQ). The Rev. Westerveld addressed synod describing the ERQ and its ministries and expressed gratitude for our sister church relationship. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 3.

Article 13 – FCC – Fraternal Delegate Address

Elder Schouten introduced Elder Dr. James Wanliss, credentialed delegate of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC). Elder Wanliss addressed synod describing the FCC, its worship and outreach efforts, its history and distinctives, and expressed gratitude for our unity in faith. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 4.

Article 14 – RCUS – Fraternal Delegate Address

The Rev. Pol introduced the Rev. Travis Grassmid, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS). The Rev. Grassmid addressed synod expressing appreciation for the relationship with the CanRC and urging the Synod to be faithful to the Word in the matters before it. He briefly discussed matters the RCUS has been and is dealing with. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 5.

Article 15 – Closing Devotions

The chairman made some announcements regarding agenda items and housekeeping matters. The Rev. Holtvlüwer had those present sing Psalm 101:1,2,3. He read Philippians 1:1-11 and spoke some words of meditation and encouragement. He then had those present sing Psalm 16:1,4 and led in prayer, among others for the GGRI, ERQ, FCC, and RCUS.

Synod was adjourned until 9:00am the next day.

Day 2 — Morning Session
Wednesday, May 15, 2019

Article 16 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Psalm 119:1-8, spoke some words, led in prayer, and had those present sing Psalm 119:1,2,3. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with. A newly arrived fraternal observer was welcomed.

Article 17 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 18 – FCC (Free Church of Scotland (Continuing))

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations for Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) (8.2.2.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 45) decided concerning the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing):
 - [4.1] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) under the adopted rules;
 - [4.2] To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - [4.2.1] To continue personal contact with the FCC 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.
 - [4.2.2] To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC congregations in North America.
- 2.2 There is an FCC mission post in Smith Falls, Ontario, in the vicinity of the Ottawa-Jubilee CanRC.
- 2.3 The CRCA reports that they have visited the General Assembly of the FCC (GA-FCC) in May, 2017, and reviewed the materials for this GA. On the basis of that review and visit, they conclude that “the FCC desires to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ.”
- 2.4 There is no report concerning the GAs of 2016 or 2018.
- 2.5 The CRCA recommends to continue the relationship with the FCC.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee is positive about the faithfulness of the FCC. However, for Synod to be able to evaluate the CRCA’s assessment, it would have been helpful to receive more information. For example, there is no information concerning the GAs of 2016 and 2018.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

-
- 4.1 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) under the adopted rules;
 - 4.2 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at assemblies of sister churches;
 - 4.2.2 To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC congregations in North America;
 - 4.2.3 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;
 - 4.2.4 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Synod was adjourned until 2:00pm for committee work.

Day 2 — Afternoon Session
Wednesday, May 15, 2019

Article 19 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Psalm 90:1,2. He noted all synod members were present.

Article 20 – Motion on voting

The following was moved by Elder A. Witten and seconded by the Rev. C.J. VanderVelde:

To add to the Guidelines for General Synod as “I.4 – voting”:

The tabulation of votes of decisions made in open plenary sessions – upon request by two delegates at general synod – may be recorded.

Following discussion the motion was

DEFEATED

Article 21 – FCS (Free Church of Scotland)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations for Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) (8.2.2.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 46) decided concerning the Free Church of Scotland (FCS):
- [4.1] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) under the adopted rules;
 - [4.2] To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - [4.2.1] 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.
 - [4.2.2] To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCS congregations in North America.
- 2.2 There are no FCS congregations in the vicinity of CanRCs; there are several congregations on Prince Edward Island.
- 2.3 The CRCA reports that they have visited the General Assembly (GA-FCS) of May, 2017, and reviewed the materials for this GA. On the basis of that review and visit, they conclude that “the FCS desires to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ.”
- 2.4 There is no report concerning the annual GAs of 2016 or 2018.
- 2.5 The CRCA recommends to continue the relationship with the FCS.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 There is no point in continuing the mandate “to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCS congregations in North America,” given that there are no FCS congregations near CanRCs.
- 3.2 The committee is positive about the faithfulness of the FCS. However, for synod to be able to evaluate the CRCA’s assessment, it would have been helpful to receive more information. For example, there is no information concerning the GAs of 2016 and 2018.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) under the adopted rules;
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at assemblies of sister churches);
 - 4.2.2 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;
 - 4.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 22 – ERQ (Reformed Church of Quebec)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) regarding the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) (8.2.3.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the following church: Attercliffe (8.3.2.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 59) decided concerning the ERQ:
 - [4.1] To thank the Lord for the faithful Reformed witness provided in and by the ERQ; continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the ERQ under the adopted rules;
 - [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.
- 2.2 The CCCNA had frequent interactions with the ERQ committee and attended ERQ synods. They provide details relating to how we support one another in God’s service. For example, regarding the issue of the interpretation of Genesis 1, the ERQ decided not

to make separate doctrinal pronouncements beside the confessions. However, our committee noted that the ERQ synod did decide to add specific questions regarding this issue during the examination of ministers and elders. The CanRC delegates were privileged to witness two elder examinations in person.

- 2.3 The Attercliffe CanRC requests that we continue discussions on points of doctrine where we differ on and continue to build each other up.
- 2.4 The CCCNA recommends to continue the relationship with the ERQ.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 With gratitude we note the faithfulness that the CCCNA could observe within the ERQ and the fruitfulness of our contact together.
- 3.2 GS 2016 Art. 59 Cons. 3.4 already addressed the point raised by Attercliffe, “When we enter 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 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.”

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ) under the adopted rules;
- 4.2 To encourage the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects.
- 4.3 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):
 - 4.3.1 To maintain contact with the ERQ according to the adopted rules;
 - 4.3.2 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 23 – Overture RSE Nov. 2018 regarding Lord’s Supper forms

1. Material

- 1.1 Overture from Regional Synod East (RSE) Nov. 2018 (8.4.5)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Willoughby Heights (8.5.1), Barrhead (8.5.10), Winnipeg-Grace (8.5.23)

2. Observations

- 2.1 RSE Nov. 2018 overtures GS 2019 “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.”
 - 2.1.1 RSE Nov. 2018 observes:

-
- 2.1.1.1 The English language has changed, and the use of the masculine pronoun to refer to both genders has become linguistically inaccurate;
- 2.1.1.2 The masculine pronouns in the forms for the Lord’s Supper make them liable to misinterpretation, given the current usage of the English language.
- 2.1.2 RSE Nov. 2018 gives the following rationale:
- 2.1.2.1 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.
- 2.1.2.2 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.
- 2.2 The churches make the following points:
- 2.2.1 The Willoughby Heights CanRC supports the intent of the overture and suggests appointing a committee to present GS 2022 with revised texts for the Lord’s Supper forms. Willoughby Heights notes that it does not consider it proper for General Synod to adopt revised texts for liturgical forms without the input of the churches.
- 2.2.2 The Barrhead CanRC finds “that the adjustment of pronouns would be an improvement which would more clearly relay the sense of the content in the Forms as applying equally to all.” Barrhead questions the timing of making such a change, as the newest version of the *Book of Praise* is only five years old and the urgency of such an update is disputable. They suggest that the SCBP be mandated to study this matter and come with a recommendation to the churches in its report to a subsequent General Synod.
- 2.2.3 The Winnipeg-Grace CanRC writes “as churches we need to be on guard that if we do change the pronouns that we do not do it from a standpoint that accepts the tenets of the modern feminist worldview or undermines Biblical teaching in any way. We are not necessarily against the recommendation of this overture from RSE. However, we propose that General Synod appoint the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* to study this matter and come with recommendations to a future General Synod with specific wording in line with the overture. This will allow the churches to know exactly what it will be accepting if changes are made.” Winnipeg-Grace further states that “If we do change the pronouns, then we need to keep them singular to keep the self-examination part of the form as personal as possible.”
- 3. Considerations**
- 3.1 RSE Nov. 2018 makes a valid point that the English language has changed and therefore the use of masculine pronouns in the forms for Lord’s Supper could make them liable to misinterpretation.

- 3.2 General Synod has been served by SCBP in matters of linguistic changes to the liturgical forms (see GS 2013 Art. 101). It would be advisable to ask the committee to study this and propose appropriate changes to the Lord's Supper forms giving special attention to the personal nature of self-examination. In this process the churches would have opportunity to interact with any proposed changes.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To mandate the SCBP to study and propose appropriate changes as per Considerations 3.1, 3.2.

ADOPTED

Article 24 – Appeal of Orangeville re: RSE May 2018 Art. 7 (Application of CO Art. 31)

Committee 2 submitted a report seeking direction on an appeal from the Orangeville CanRC (8.6.2.1). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further work.

Article 25 – Request of Hamilton-Blessings re: GS 1983 Art. 145 (expression “confessions” in liturgical forms)

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a report on a request from the Hamilton-Blessings CanRC (8.6.7.1) The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 26 – CRTS – Appointment of professor New Testament

This matter was dealt with by Synod in closed-restricted session.

1. Material

- 1.1 Letter with appendices from the Board of Governors (BoG) of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CRTS) with a proposal to fill the vacancy in the department of New Testament (8.2.7.3)
- 1.2 Report of the Board of Governors (8.2.7.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The Board of Governors informs General Synod that it granted Dr. Gerhard Visscher's request to retire upon the completion of the 2019-20 academic year.
- 2.2 The Board of Governors appointed a Search Committee for a new professor and received input from many churches as well as from the Faculty.
- 2.3 Having investigated several possibilities the Board now requests GS 2019 to give leave to the Board of Governors to appoint Dr. William den Hollander of Langley, BC, as professor of New Testament.
- 2.4 The Board of Governors has supplied Synod with information about Dr. den Hollander as well as letters of reference.

3. Consideration

- 3.1 Based on the information supplied by the Board of Governors, General Synod deems Dr. William den Hollander to be well qualified for this position.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To approve of the retirement of Dr. Gerhard Visscher and express deep gratitude for his many years of faithful and diligent service to the Seminary and the Churches as professor of New Testament and for his nine years as principal of the Seminary.
- 4.2 To direct the Board of Governors to appoint Dr. William den Hollander of Langley, BC as professor of New Testament.

ADOPTED by secret ballot with members of the Board of Governors and family of Dr. William den Hollander abstaining.

Article 27 – Appeal of S. Viersen re: RSW 2018 Art. 7 & 18 (personal)

This matter was dealt with by Synod in closed session, with the Rev. J. Louwse absent.

Committee 1 submitted a report seeking direction on an appeal from br. S. Viersen (8.6.11.2).

The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further work.

Article 28 – Appeal of T. Bosma re: RSE May 2018 Art. 7 (personal)

This matter was dealt with by Synod in closed session.

Committee 2 submitted a report seeking direction on an appeal from br. T. Bosma (8.6.4.1). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further work.

Article 29 – Letter from Lincoln-Vineyard regarding appeal of T. Bosma (personal)

This matter was dealt with by Synod in closed session.

Committee 2 submitted a report seeking direction on a letter relating to the appeal from br. T. Bosma (8.6.4.3). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further work.

Synod was adjourned until 7:00pm for committee work.

Day 2 — Evening Session
Wednesday, May 15, 2019

Article 30 – Reopening

Synod reopened in open plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Hymn 84:1,2. He noted all synod members were present. He welcomed newly arrived fraternal delegates.

Article 31 – FRCSA – Fraternal Delegate Address

The Rev. Poppe introduced br. Johannes Moes, credentialed delegate of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA). Br. Moes addressed Synod describing the FRCSA, its history and its ministries. He expressed gratitude for unity in the faith, evident in the assistance the FRCSA receives from CRTS in training theological students. He outlined the need for financial support in South Africa for mission projects and described the inter-church relations of the FRCSA. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 6.

Article 32 – IRB – Fraternal Delegate Address

The Rev. VanSpronsen introduced the Rev. Adriano Gama, Elder Ademir Souza, and the Rev. Iraldo Luna, credentialed delegates of the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB). The Rev. Gama, with the Rev. Jim Witteveen translating, addressed Synod describing the IRB, expressing gratitude for the relationship with the CanRC and the 48 years of work by the CanRC in Brazil. He described the history of the IRB and some of its projects and ministries. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 7.

Article 33 – CRTS – Announcement re New Testament professor

The chairman made the public announcement that the Rev. Dr. William den Hollander had been appointed as professor of New Testament at CRTS, to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Gerhard Visscher in 2020.

Article 34 – GKv – Fraternal Delegate Address

The Rev. VanderVelde introduced the Rev. Rinze IJbema and the Rev. Dr. Melle Oosterhuis, credentialed delegates of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv). The Rev. IJbema addressed synod, bringing greetings in the Name of the risen Lord. He described the origin of the relationship between the GKv and CanRC in 1952. He expressed regret about the tension that exists between the GKv and the CanRC at this time. He stated that the GKv would dearly love for the sister church relationship to continue. The Rev. Dr. Oosterhuis then addressed synod. He explained the decisions of GS-GKv 2017 (Meppel), especially regarding hermeneutics as the background to GKv decisions that concern the CanRC. The full text of their addresses can be found in Appendix 8.

Article 35 – GGRC – Fraternal Delegate Address

The Rev. Janssen introduced the Rev. Yonson Dethan, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRC). The Rev. Dethan addressed Synod passing on

greetings. He expressed appreciation for the ties with the CanRC, and regret over the fact that those ties have not yet become ones of ecclesiastical fellowship. He described the history of the GGRC, its Indonesian context, its current ministries and outreach projects, including its involvement with the mission work of the Smithville CanRC in Timor. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 9.

Article 36 – Closing Devotions

The chairman made some announcements regarding agenda items and housekeeping matters. The Rev. VanderVelde led in evening devotions. He had those present sing Hymn 66. He read 2 Corinthians 9 and spoke some words of meditation, connecting the passage to inter-church relations. He then led in prayer, among others for the FRCSA, IRB, GKv, and GGRC, and for the Rev. Dr. W. den Hollander and the Rev. Dr. G. Visscher.

Synod was adjourned until 9:00am the next day.

Day 3 — Morning Session
Thursday, May 16, 2019

Article 37 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Psalm 119:9-17, spoke some words, led in prayer, and had those present sing Psalm 119:4,5,6. A newly arrived fraternal observer was welcomed.

Article 38 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 39 – Voting

The chairman presented the following as a ruling of the chair in relation to voting:

A delegate should abstain if:

1. a matter particularly involves his person or his church (CO Art. 32);
2. a matter pertains to the Board of Governors and he is a member of the Board (on account of his legal context);
3. a matter pertains to the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* and he is a member of the Committee (on account of his legal context);

A delegate has freedom to vote or abstain but is encouraged to keep the spirit of CO Art. 32 in mind when:

4. he was a member of a minor assembly which previously decided regarding a matter being appealed;

A delegate has freedom to vote even though:

5. he was a member of a committee reporting to synod (e.g. CRCA, CNSF).

A simple majority constitutes more than half of the votes cast, not counting the abstentions.

After announcements regarding some housekeeping matters, Synod was adjourned until 2:00pm for committee work.

Day 3 — Afternoon Session
Thursday, May 16, 2019

Article 40 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Psalm 108:2. He noted all synod members were present.

The chairman informed Synod that Rev. Dr. den Hollander would be coming in person to Synod on Monday.

Article 41 – GKv (Reformed Churches in The Netherlands)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad – Subcommittee Relations with Churches in The Netherlands (CRCA-SRN) on the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) (8.2.2.4)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Guelph-Emmanuel (8.3.1.1.1), Flamborough-Redemption (8.3.1.1.3), Fergus-North (8.3.1.1.5), Hamilton-Cornerstone (8.3.1.1.6), Houston (8.3.1.1.7), Carman-West (8.3.1.1.8), Burlington-Ebenezer (8.3.1.1.9), Barrhead (8.3.1.1.10), Winnipeg-Grace (8.3.1.1.11), Orangeville (8.3.1.1.12), Attercliffe (8.3.1.9)

2. Observations

2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 104) decided:

- [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 Scriptures 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), 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.

- 2.2 The subcommittee responsible for contact with the GKv provides an extensive report of their work since GS 2016. Of particular interest are the following points:
- 2.2.1 The subcommittee sent a copy of the decision of GS 2016 to each of the GKv churches. They also informed GS-GKv 2017 (hereafter “Synod Meppel”) in writing of the decisions of GS 2016.
 - 2.2.2 Almost all of the sister churches represented at Synod Meppel (including our own) voiced “serious concerns” to this synod about the proposal to open the offices of the church to women. Nevertheless, Synod Meppel decided that there were Scriptural grounds to call women to serve in the offices of deacon, elder, and minister. This decision has subsequently been implemented within the churches.
 - 2.2.3 Synod Meppel expressed the longing to become a single federation with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) 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.” Our subcommittee expresses reservation about this proposed union because the commitment to listen to what the Lord says in his Word sounds hollow in light of the fact that both the GKv and the NGK have admitted women to office in spite of Scripture’s clear directives to the contrary. Further, there has historically been no clear and common understanding of what subscription to the Reformed Confessions and adherence to the Church Order means as it was one of the central reasons for the split between the two churches in the first place. On this topic our subcommittee concludes that “these two churches are continuing to turn away from the clear directives of God’s Word and the Reformed Confessions.”
 - 2.2.4 One of the professors at the Theological University in Kampen, Dr. A.J. de Bruijne, has written material that opens the door to ethical judgments that could contradict the directives of Scripture. For example, though Scripture condemns homosexuality Dr. de Bruijne’s reasoning would provide opening to the legitimization of this behavior. In this context it is striking to note that Synod Meppel appointed deputies to study whether there is reason to modify the way the churches have traditionally dealt with homosexuality. Dr. Burger has clarified but not backed away from what he had earlier written. Though he was encouraged to, he has not published anything that would remove the confusion he generated by his earlier writings. Synod Meppel also decided to work positively to the establishment of a Reformed Theological University that would include the Kampen Seminary and the Theological University in Apeldoorn of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (CGKN). The Synod of the CGKN decided, however, that the TUA would not be part of this venture on grounds of distrust about the theological direction they see in Kampen.
 - 2.2.5 Synod Meppel decided to instruct deputies to “participate” in the proposed “National Synod” 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.” Given that this proposed body is “composed of representatives of very different churches including the Remonstrant Brotherhood,” the sort of unity being pursued by this body cannot be based on

- Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. It is understood that the unity proposed by this “National Synod” is not necessarily meant to be ecclesiastical in nature.
- 2.2.6 The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) suspended the GKv from its membership in its meeting in July 2017.
- 2.2.7 Our subcommittee reports with 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 21st century western culture.” Though the movement has been happening for some time, “it has come to a real watershed with the decision of Synod Meppel to permit the ordination of females to office.”
- 2.2.8 The subcommittee recommends that Synod Edmonton decide “to discontinue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKv,” and provide the following 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.
- 2.2.9 The subcommittee recommends that in the event Synod decides to go along with the recommendation, Synod also “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.”
- 2.3 Several churches have responded to the Report about the GKv. They all express agreement with the recommendation of the subcommittee to discontinue the historic relationship with the GKv. Some specifics should be noted:
- 2.3.1 The Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC requests Synod to provide public instruction to our churches to be on guard lest we follow the GKv in their slide.
- 2.3.2 The Hamilton-Cornerstone CanRC requests Synod to discontinue EF with the GKv but at the same time to instruct the CRCA to continue to monitor the developments in the GKv and maintain some (undefined) contact with these churches so as to be able to assist those within the GKv who remain concerned. The Winnipeg-Grace CanRC makes a similar request.
- 2.3.3 The Flamborough-Redemption CanRC requests that, as GS 2016 mandated deputies to communicate its decision to each of the GKv churches in writing, GS 2019 ought to communicate the present decision (to discontinue sister relations) in writing to each GKv church as a means of encouraging the faithful to take appropriate action.
- 2.4 The delegation from the GKv addressed synod:
- 2.4.1 The Rev. Rinze IJbema passed on greetings from the GKv. As he has served in both the CanRC and GKv, he was able to articulate that the “gap” between the two churches was painful for both parties. For the text of his address see Appendix 8.
- 2.4.2 Rev Dr Melle Oosterhuis had served as chairman of the Synod of Meppel. He offered a presentation to defend the thought that the new hermeneutic adopted by the GKv was in fact not new at all but was the hermeneutic of K. Schilder and B. Holwerda, and in line with that of the apostle Paul, and indeed of Jesus Christ himself. He stressed that the report of our subcommittee did not provide sufficient grounds relating to the topic new hermeneutics to discontinue EF with the GKv and urged the Synod to postpone a decision till at least next Synod. For the text of his address see Appendix 8.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The report of the CRCA-SRN is clear in its presentation of developments in the GKv as outlined above and convincing in its assessment of what these developments signal. Nothing in the presentation of the Rev. Dr. Oosterhuis shows that the subcommittee’s

outline of developments is inaccurate or that its assessment of these developments and their implications is in error.

- 3.2 Sister churches from around the world have encouraged the GKv to rethink the course upon which they have gone, including admonitions from the CanRC. At Synod Meppel in 2017, the GKv was not convinced by the admonitions of their sister churches. This gives no confidence for us to expect change in the GKv in the immediate future.
- 3.3 Ecclesiastical Fellowship is extended to churches where we find the marks of the true church (BC Art. 29). The presence of the marks of the church are premised on a given church accepting the authority of the Word of God. Now that the GKv approve of developments contrary to the Lord's instruction in his Word, the marks of the true church cannot with confidence be said to be consistently present in these churches.
- 3.4 Continuing a relation with the GKv could communicate that we are not sorely grieved by their recent decisions and are not in earnest about our past letters and words of admonition. Conversely, severing the relation would communicate to our own members the need to be watchful that we in the CanRC do not follow a similar path. At the same time, severing the relation would give encouragement to the faithful members in the GKv to take similar action.
- 3.5 Discontinuing the relationship at this time does not have to be irreversible. Should a future synod of the GKv give evidence that the churches have reversed their direction, the CanRCs can re-establish relations.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the subcommittee mandated by GS 2016 for the diligent work they have done.
- 4.2 With sadness to discontinue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv) and to implore the CanRCs to continue in prayer for the GKv.
- 4.3 To convey this decision, together with a letter of explanation and encouragement, to each of the GKv congregations.
- 4.4 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.4.1 To deliver this decision and letter (see 4.3) in person to the next Synod of the GKv;
 - 4.4.2 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED unanimously.

The Rev. Bouwman read Psalm 25:1-10 and led in prayer.

During discussion the following **amendment** was moved, seconded and **adopted**.

To replace in consideration 3.3 the words:

the marks of the true church cannot be said to be present

with the words:

the marks of the true church cannot with confidence be said to be consistently present in these churches.

Article 42 – Appeal of Orangeville re: RSE May 2018 Art. 7 (“Application of CO Art. 31”)

1. Material

1.1 Appeal from the Church of Orangeville re Art 7 of the Acts of RSE May 2018 (8.6.2.1)

2. Admissibility

2.1 This appeal is deemed admissible.

3. Observations

3.1 The Acts of RSE May 2018 state the following in Article 7:

Article 7 – Lincoln-Vineyard’s Request to Revise (or Review) RSE 2017 Article 19.

Lincoln-Vineyard acknowledges that, according to Article 31 CO, it has the right to appeal RSE 2017 Article 19 to the next general synod but argues that a revision (or review) by this RSE May 2018 would be more appropriate for pastoral concerns and church political grievances.

[3.1.1.1] Regarding the pastoral concerns, Lincoln-Vineyard argues that the decision of RSE 2017 has left the appellant feeling vindicated while Lincoln-Vineyard consistory feels otherwise. This confusion presents an “obstacle” to the pastoral care of the member. To wait till general synod 2019 would prolong the confusion and hamper pastoral care. Additionally, due to the sensitive nature of the materials, Lincoln-Vineyard is concerned that the matter be dealt with in the “smallest circle” possible.

[3.1.1.2] Regarding the church political grievances, Lincoln-Vineyard finds several faults with the decision of RSE 2017 in Article 19:

[3.1.1.2.1] Lincoln-Vineyard faults synod for going beyond the mandate given it in Article 31 CO. RSE 2017 was confronted with an appeal of a sister against the decision of a classis. However, RSE 2017 instead of judging that decision, endeavoured in its considerations to identify “critical and key moments” in the course of events that “should be addressed and focussed on as the heart of the matter.” Among these moments were many specific interactions between the appellant and the consistory of Lincoln-Vineyard (see especially Lincoln-Vineyard faults synod for stating in Consideration 3 that the “appellant does not clearly show how the decisions of Classis Niagara are in conflict with Scripture and the Church Order,” but failing to render the necessary, consequent decision to deny the appeal.

[3.1.1.2.2] Lincoln-Vineyard faults synod for not making “a decision either to sustain or to deny the sister’s appeal,” but only presenting its considerations as its answer to the appeal. Lincoln-Vineyard complains

that it is unclear how one “may appeal considerations of a minor assembly to a major assembly.”

- [3.1.1.2.3] Lincoln-Vineyard faults RSE 2017 for ignoring the fact that Classis Niagara June 21, 2017 had clarifying materials available to it from Lincoln-Vineyard consistory which RSE 2017 itself did not. Yet RSE 2017 proceeded to make commentary on the actions of Lincoln-Vineyard consistory without hearing its version of events.
- [3.1.1.2.4] The motion carried, and synod acceded to Lincoln-Vineyard’s request. A motion as made and seconded to review (i.e. to set aside the original decision and revisit the matter) the decision of RSE 2017 (Art. 19).
- 3.2 Orangeville asks GS 2019 to judge that RSE May 2018 acted contrary to the Church Order, when it decided to set aside a decision of RSE 2017 and revisit a matter that should have been dealt with by a General Synod.
- 3.3 Orangeville notes that RSE May 2018 simply takes over Lincoln-Vineyard’s statement that “it has the right to appeal the decision of RSE 2017 Art. 19 but argues that a revision (or review) would be more appropriate for pastoral and church political grievances.” Orangeville observes that even though CO Art. 31 stipulates that if someone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly, the Church Order has no article dealing with revision by the same level of ecclesiastical assembly. Orangeville states that RSE May 2018 should have given reasons for not abiding by CO Art. 31.
- 3.4 Orangeville notes that RSE May 2018 unquestioningly takes over Lincoln-Vineyard’s reasoning that pastoral concerns and church political grievances would be more appropriate at the level of Regional Synod. According to Orangeville this is an unsubstantiated statement. They argue that although it can be appreciated that consistories deal with difficult situations, the peace of the church is not served by ignoring the rules that have been adopted by common consent.
- 3.5 Orangeville notes that RSE May 2018 did not interact with the fact that it was not the original appellant who asked for review of her appeal, but the party against which the accusation originated. As the party that felt wronged by the decision of RSE 2017, the only proper way for Lincoln-Vineyard to address the matter was to approach the next General Synod.
- 3.6 Orangeville notes that the reality of church life is that although decisions of broader assemblies do not function as common law or case law, this action of RSE May 2018 will serve as precedent for ignoring the clear provision of CO Art. 31.

4. Considerations

- 4.1 Although some church order commentaries do leave allowance for revision of previous ecclesiastical decisions others do not. The request for revision can potentially result in a conflict of interest or even a perception thereof. In the history of the CanRC we have worked with broader assemblies to minimize the possibility that those judging do not influence or judge the same case a second time.
- 4.2 The Orangeville CanRC is correct that RSE May 2018 unquestioningly takes over the reasoning of the Lincoln-Vineyard CanRC that pastoral concerns and church political grievances would be more appropriate at the level of Regional Synod. Lincoln-Vineyard

can be commended for the desire to keep this pastoral matter in the smallest circle possible but this is not sufficient grounds to deviate from the clear intent of CO Art. 31. Lincoln-Vineyard's church political grievances are also matters that should be dealt with by way of an appeal to the broader assembly.

- 4.3 Although Orangeville argues that the appellant to RSE 2017 could request a revision, the proper recourse for either party is to appeal to the broader assembly.
- 4.4 Orangeville is correct that this decision of RSE May 2018, allowing a revision, will serve as precedent for ignoring the clear intent of CO Art. 31.
- 4.5 In appealing this decision Orangeville's intent was not to undo the decision of RSE May 2018, but rather to prevent the setting of a precedent. Thus this decision of GS 2019 has no impact on the other appeals against RSE May 2018.

5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To sustain the appeal of the Orangeville CanRC re: RSE May 2018 Art. 7.

ADOPTED

During discussion the following amendments were moved and seconded and **adopted**:

1. To delete from observation 4.1 the line:

Orangeville is correct that Church Order Article 31 does not leave room for revision of previous ecclesiastical decisions.

2. To insert at the * in the following sentence in consideration 4.1:

*Although some church order commentaries do leave allowance for revision * others do not.*

the words:

of previous ecclesiastical decisions

so that the sentence reads:

Although some church order commentaries do leave allowance for revision of previous ecclesiastical decisions others do not.

Article 43 – Appeal of Chilliwack re: RSW Art. 5 & 19 (treating an “appeal” as a “submission”)

Committee 1 presented draft 1 of a report on a Chilliwack appeal (8.6.9.1). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 44 – Appeal of Chilliwack re: GS 2016 Art. 87 (Women Voting)

Committee 1 presented draft 1 of a report on a Chilliwack appeal (8.6.1.1). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 45 – General Fund

1. Material

- 1.1 Financial Report for General Fund from January 1, 2016 to February 4, 2019 by the Carman-East CanRC (8.2.13.1)
- 1.2 Audit of the General Fund by the Carman-West CanRC (8.2.13.2)

2. Observations

- 2.1 Carman-East was appointed by GS 2016 to administer the General Fund, and to collect funds as required from the churches.
- 2.2 Carman-East notes that br. Gerry Vandersluis, who had been appointed by Carman-East to serve as the treasurer of this fund on their behalf, has retired from this position after thirty years, and sr. Hilly Kooiker has been appointed in his place.
- 2.3 Carman-East “requests that Synod 2019 have each committee appoint a treasurer to approve all requests for reimbursement for any member on that committee.”
- 2.4 Carman-West reports that an audit of the books was performed and all was found to be in good order.
- 2.5 To administer this fund, the churches were assessed \$2 annually for each of the years 2016, 2017, and 2018.
- 2.6 The balance of the Fund as of January 1, 2016 was \$41,614.59; total income amounted to \$70,053.61; total disbursements amounted to \$100,245.90; and the balance as of February 4, 2019 was \$11,422.30.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Carman-East has fulfilled its mandate regarding the General Fund.
- 3.2 The lengthy and faithful service of br. G. Vandersluis is highly appreciated and duly noted and he should receive the gratitude of the churches.
- 3.3 Carman-East is essentially requesting (see Obs. 2.3) internal accountability within each committee for expenses being submitted to the General Fund. This is reasonable and prudent. This will have implications for the mandates synod gives to the various committees of synod.
- 3.4 Carman-West has fulfilled its mandate in performing an audit of the books. Synod notes that the word “audit” is normally reserved as a technical term for an official inspection of the books by professionals. A more appropriate way to describe Carman-West’s mandate is to say that Carman West is being asked to inspect the books.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To receive with thankfulness the report from the Carman-East CanRC and the audit from the Carman-West CanRC;
- 4.2 To express gratitude to br. G. Vandersluis for faithfully functioning as treasurer for so many years and to note with gratitude that sr. H. Kooiker is willing to serve in his place;
- 4.3 To authorize Carman-East to collect funds from the churches as required until the time of the next synod;
- 4.4 To discharge Carman-East for the duties completed during the period of January 1, 2016 to February 4, 2019;

- 4.5 To reappoint Carman-East to administer the General Fund;
- 4.6 To reappoint Carman-West to inspect the books of the General Fund;
- 4.7 To mandate each committee of synod that has expenses to claim from the General Fund to ensure that all submitted expenses are first verified by someone within that committee appointed for that purpose.

ADOPTED

Article 46 – General Synod Archives

1. Material

- 1.1 Report on the Inspection of Archives for GS 2019 (8.2.6.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 No report was received from the Archive Church for general synods (i.e. the Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC).
- 2.2 The Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC inspected the archives of GS 2016 and reports that they are complete and in good order.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 While it was not mandated by GS 2016, it has been customary for the Archive Church to report to general synod on its activities since at least 2007. It is a good practice to keep the churches informed by means of such regular reporting. At the same time, it is clear from the inspection report that Burlington-Ebenezer has continued to faithfully keep the archives in order and up to date.
- 3.2 Burlington-Rehoboth has fulfilled its mandate regarding inspection of the archives.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express gratitude to Burlington-Ebenezer and Burlington-Rehoboth for fulfilling their mandates;
- 4.2 To reappoint Burlington-Ebenezer as Archive Church and Burlington-Rehoboth to inspect synod archives;
- 4.3 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;
- 4.4 To mandate both the Archive Church and the inspecting church to report to the churches on their activities six months prior to the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Synod was adjourned until 7:00pm for committee work.

Day 3 — Evening Session
Thursday, May 16, 2019

Article 47 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Psalm 87:1,2,3. He noted all synod members were present.

Article 48 – FRCA – Fraternal Delegate Address

Elder Vane introduced the Rev. Hendrik Alkema and the Rev. Richard Pot, credentialed delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). The Rev. Alkema addressed Synod, expressing appreciation and gratitude for the close ties between the FRCA and CanRC. He described some of the many ways in which the two federations are connected. He spoke briefly of the development of an Australian *Book of Praise* and the study of the feasibility of training for the ministry in Australia. He gave an overview of the inter-church relations of the FRCA. The full text of the address can be found in Appendix 10.

Article 49 – RCNZ – Fraternal Delegate Address

Elder Jans introduced the Rev. Leo de Vos, credentialed delegate of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ). The Rev. de Vos addressed Synod, describing the New Zealand setting, the history of Christianity in New Zealand, and the blended character of the RCNZ. He gave an impression of church life in the RCNZ and expressed appreciation of the way in which the RCNZ and CanRC cooperate in mission in Papua New Guinea. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 11.

Article 50 – URCNA – Fraternal Delegate Address

The Rev. Slaa introduced the Rev. Bill Pols, credentialed delegate of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). The Rev. Pols expressed appreciation for the ties between the URCNA and the CanRC, describing how some of those ties are evident in church life. He outlined some of the recent developments in the URCNA, including the doctrinal affirmation on marriage and the introduction of the *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal*. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 12.

Article 51 – ARPC – Fraternal Observer Address

Elder Bremer introduced the Rev. Bill Barron, credentialed delegate of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC). The Rev. Barron addressed Synod, speaking of the history of the ARPC and its current character. He described how the ARPC and Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) are growing together. He gave an impression of some of the works in the ARPC, including its education ministries and its mission projects. The full text of his address can be found in Appendix 13.

Article 52 – Request of Hamilton-Blessings re: GS 1983 Art. 145 (expression “confessions” in liturgical forms)

Committee 5 presented a second draft of its report on a request from the Hamilton-Blessings CanRC (8.6.7.1). One round of discussion took place. Because of the late hour, the second round was deferred to the next session. (Continued: Article 56)

Article 53 – Closing Devotions

The chairman made some announcements regarding agenda items and housekeeping matters. The Rev. Feenstra read 1 Corinthians 16:19-24 and spoke some words of meditation on the place of greetings in the church. He had those present sing Hymn 61:1,2. He then led in prayer, among others for the FRCA, RCNZ, URCNA, and ARPC.

Synod was adjourned until 9:00am the next day.

Day 4 — Morning Session
Friday, May 17, 2019

Article 54 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Psalm 119:17-24, spoke some words, led in prayer, and had those present sing Psalm 119:7,8,9. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.

Article 55 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 56 – Request of Hamilton-Blessings re: GS 1983 Art. 145 (expression “confessions” in liturgical forms)

Discussion continued on the report of Committee 5 (cf. Article 52). The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 57 – Letter from Lincoln-Vineyard regarding appeal of T. Bosma

This matter was dealt with by Synod in closed session.

Committee 2 submitted a report seeking direction on a letter relating to the appeal from br. T. Bosma (8.6.4.3). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for further work.

Synod was adjourned until 7:00pm for committee work.

Day 4 — Evening Session
Friday, May 17, 2019

Article 58 – Reopening

Synod reopened in open plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Hymn 49. He called the roll and noted all synod members were present.

Article 59 – Adoption of Acts

A prepared article of the *Acts* was adopted.

Article 60 – RCUS (Reformed Church in the United States)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) regarding the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) (8.2.3.1)
- 1.2 Letter from Attercliffe (8.3.2.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 60) decided concerning the RCUS:
 - [4.1] To thank the Lord for the faithfulness of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) to the Word of God and the Reformed confessions;
 - [4.2] To continue the relationship of EF with the RCUS under the adopted rules.
- 2.2 The CCCNA has fulfilled its mandate and has also sent a delegation to the RCUS 270th Synod Bakersfield, CA (May 16-19, 2016), RCUS 271st Synod, Kansas City, MO (May 15-18, 2017), and RCUS 272nd Synod, Golden Valley MN (May 21-24, 2018). In each of these years, the CCCNA also met with the RCUS ICR committee at NAPARC.
- 2.3 The RCUS has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the CanRC in regard to the issues confronting the GKv, a sister church to both church bodies. The RCUS very much appreciates the developing relationship with the CanRC. They especially appreciate having fraternal delegates attend a significant portion of the meeting at both classis and the synod level.
- 2.4 Opportunities exist to work together on foreign mission projects, especially in the Philippines.
- 2.5 The CCCNA has had discussions and will continue at opportune times to discuss differing church polity or practices.
- 2.6 The CCCNA recommends continuing the relationship with the RCUS.
- 2.7 The Attercliffe CanRC agrees with the EF we have with the RCUS. Attercliffe is unclear where we stand with the RCUS on matters of proper Lord's Supper supervision, Sunday observance, and church doctrine (GS 1998 Art. 51).

3. Considerations

- 3.1 It is evident that the CCCNA has been diligent in fulfilling its mandate in regard to the RCUS.
- 3.2 The RCUS is very appreciative of the relationship that they have with the CanRC.

- 3.3 With gratitude the CCCNA could observe faithfulness within the RCUS and the fruitfulness of our contact together.
- 3.4 It would be beneficial for the RCUS and the CanRC to continue to interact with each other in the possibility of foreign mission projects.
- 3.5 The CCCNA has already interacted with the RCUS on the matters raised by Attercliffe. GS 2016 Art. 59 Cons. 3.4 should also be kept in mind.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS);
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):
 - 4.2.1 To maintain contact with the RCUS according to the adopted rules;
 - 4.2.2 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 61 – ARPC (Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) regarding the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) (8.2.3.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 49) decided to mandate the CCCNA:
 - [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 next general synod.
- 2.2 The CanRC does not have EF with the ARPC but is a member of NAPARC together with the ARPC. Their delegate to GS 2019 mentioned that the ARPC is also a member of the ICRC.
- 2.3 The committee received invitations from the ARPC Inter-church Relations Committee (IRC) to their 2017 and 2018 General Synods in which the CCCNA sent observers. They also had an informal bi-lateral meeting with the ARPC delegates to NAPARC in November of 2017 and 2018.
- 2.4 The ARPC has a very long history that dates back to the 18th century. As a result of this lengthy history, they often have many small congregations within a relatively limited geographical region. Though the ARPC has congregations as far north as in Canada and as far west as California, they are a deeply southern denomination.

- 2.5 Historically, the ARPC's closest ecclesiastical relationships have been with the RPCNA. They have met jointly in Synod with RPCNA in 2015 and plan to meet jointly again in the year 2019. The biggest difference between the ARPC and the RPCNA is that the RPCNA adheres to exclusive psalmody. The ARPC also has "fraternal relationships" with the PCA and OPC.
- 2.6 Of late, most ARPC churches have a single service on Sundays. Most congregations also have Sunday school prior to the worship service. Catechism instruction and preaching are not part of their history or current practice, although a significant number of congregations are making an effort to introduce catechetical instruction to the whole congregation.
- 2.7 A particular high point of the ARPC Synod in 2018 involved the "return to the fold" of Erskine College and Theological Seminary. Those institutions had been in the grip of liberalism for some time, but a successful, concentrated effort was made to bring them under more direct Synodical control and therefore return to conservative, biblical orientation.
- 2.8 Like their "cousins" in the RPCNA, the ARPC 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.
- 2.9 There have been various interactions between the ARPC and members of the CanRC federation:
 - 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 CanRCs.
 - In October 2017, Dr. T.G. Van Raalte attended a meeting of Catawba Presbytery in South Carolina. A student from CRTS was being taken on as a student-under-care by that Presbytery.
 - The Chatham CanRC has established a close relationship with Rev. Henry Bartsch who pastors the ARPC congregation in Chatham. Rev. Bartsch has helped to support this congregation during the time of their vacancy.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee has been diligent in completing their mandate.
- 3.2 The committee gives an informative report about the ARPC.
- 3.3 There has been an increase in contact that merits investigating the possibility of closer contact between the ARPC and the CanRC.

4. Recommendations

That Synod mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):

- 4.1 To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC).
- 4.2 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 62 – Appeal of Chilliwack re: RSW 2018 Art. 5 & 19 (treating an “appeal” as a “submission”)

1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal to GS 2019 from the Chilliwack CanRC re: RSW 2018 Art. 5 & 19 (8.6.9.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 Chilliwack believes that:

- 2.1.1 RSW erred in its decision to change Chilliwack’s appeal into “Expressions of Sentiment” (see RSW 2018 Art. 5) even though Chilliwack had clearly submitted an appeal and the agenda of RSW was adopted with Chilliwack’s letter noted as an appeal (see Acts of RSW Art. 4, 5.5). When RSW 2018 reclassified Chilliwack’s appeal as an ‘expression of sentiment’, RSW 2018 took away Chilliwack’s right to appeal the decision of a minor assembly to a major assembly as per CO Art. 31.
- 2.1.2 RSW 2018 erred in its decision to deal with proposals that had not been circulated to the churches ahead of time. Chilliwack did not receive a copy of the overture of Classis Pacific East or the overture of Classis Manitoba prior to RSW, and thereby did not receive opportunity beforehand to interact with these proposals going to RSW.
- 2.1.3 After RSW 2018 changed Chilliwack’s appeal into an ‘expression of sentiment’, RSW 2018 then erred in its decision to pass on the appeal of the Chilliwack CanRC to GS 2019 for its consideration, without RSW 2018 dealing with it first (RSW 2018 Art. 19, Rec. 3.2, 3.3).

- 2.2 Chilliwack requests that:

- 2.2.1 GS 2019 rule that RSW 2018 erred in the way that RSW 2018 dealt with Chilliwack’s appeal against a decision of the minor assembly.
- 2.2.2 GS 2019 decide that the overture from RSW 2018 regarding the *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* is wrongfully on the agenda of GS 2019.
- 2.2.3 The overture from RSW 2018 be sent back to RSW to be dealt with first in an orderly way.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 It is evident that Chilliwack did submit an appeal against the decision of classis to RSW 2018, which was deemed admissible by RSW 2018. RSW 2018 treated the appeal as an ‘expression of sentiment’ related to two overtures, and thereby did not consider or make a ruling on what was in reality Chilliwack’s appeal against a decision of the minor assembly, Classis Pacific East (CPE), Feb 2018 (CO Art. 31). RSW 2018 did not give any grounds for not dealing with Chilliwack’s appeal nor for redesignating Chilliwack’s appeal as an ‘expression of sentiment’.
- 3.2 It is the expectation (cf. RSW Regulations I.C.) with an overture that copies of overtures / proposals be sent to the churches of the region in which an assembly of churches is held, prior to the convening of such an assembly. According to the RSW regulations,

RSW should have determined that Chilliwack and the other churches had received the proposals prior to RSW dealing with the matter.

- 3.3 RSW should have dealt with the appeal of Chilliwack as an appeal which was rightly on its agenda and should not have sent the appeal as an “expression of sentiment” on to GS 2019. An appeal to a regional synod against the decision of a classis should receive a clear response and not be forwarded by a regional synod to a general synod.
- 3.4 RSW 2018 erred in not responding to the appeal of Chilliwack against CPE. However that does not mean that the overture should be removed from the agenda of GS 2019, for the fact is that the overture was passed on to GS 2019 and several churches have interacted with it in good faith. Now to remove it from the agenda due to an error at RSW 2018 would not do justice to the churches who took this overture seriously.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To sustain the appeal of the Chilliwack CanRC that RSW 2018 erred in the way that RSW 2018 dealt with Chilliwack’s appeal against a decision of the minor assembly.
- 4.2 To deny the request of the Chilliwack CanRC that the overture from RSW 2018 be sent back to RSW (cf. consideration 3.4.).

ADOPTED

Article 63 – Appeal of Chilliwack re: GS 2016 Art. 87 (Women Voting)

1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal to GS 2019 from the Chilliwack CanRC re: GS 2016 Art. 87 (8.6.1.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 Chilliwack appealed the decision of GS 2010 to leave the matter of women voting in the freedom of the local church. Its appeal was answered with the decision of GS 2013 to reverse the decision of GS 2010. Chilliwack believes it was wrong for GS 2016 to overturn the decision of GS 2013 by using the argument that GS 2013 did not prove that GS 2010 was in conflict with Scripture or the Church Order. Chilliwack is of the opinion that GS 2013 did not have to prove anything but that GS 2010 should have proved that the decisions of previous synods were in conflict with the Word of God and the Church Order, which GS 2010 did not do.
- 2.2 Chilliwack is of the opinion that GS 2016 should not have reopened the way for women to vote based on something that is unclear in Scripture. Chilliwack states that we can be confident that men participated in the calling of office bearers, but we cannot be confident that women did. Therefore, Chilliwack finds that male only voting is the only option.
- 2.3 Chilliwack believes a Council is bound by the result of a congregational vote and refers to CO Art. 3 in support of its opinion (“Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons...”). This leads Chilliwack to conclude that women should not participate in the election, otherwise women make a decision which is binding on Council. In this way, women would exercise authority in the church.

- 2.4 Chilliwack argues that since GS 2016 agreed that women’s voting is a matter of the “churches in common,” it cannot be left to the local church. According to Chilliwack, a matter of the churches in common means that there must be a common answer to the question whether women may vote. Chilliwack says that it cannot be yes and no at the same time.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Chilliwack does not take into account that GS 2007 appointed a committee to “finish the mandate extended by Synod Smithville 1980” regarding women voting (GS 2007 Art. 136, Rec. 5.2). This committee reported to GS 2010 where a decision was then made. Chilliwack is therefore incorrect in its analysis that the burden of proof rested on GS 2010 rather than GS 2013.
- 3.2 It is a logical and theological fallacy to reason that if Scripture does not have clear evidence of women voting, then women may not vote. When Scripture does not speak directly to a matter, we are called to take into account the full scope of Scripture and to exercise our judgement in coming to a responsible decision.
- 3.3 Chilliwack overlooks that the Council *binds itself* to the outcome of the election according to the stipulation in the Church Order agreed upon by the churches. This means that the congregation is not binding Council or exercising authority in the church by way of a congregational vote. The view that the congregation’s vote binds Council is wrong because, according to Reformed church polity, not the congregation but Council exercises authority in the church.
- 3.4 A matter of the “churches in common” is a matter decided upon by the churches together. This does not always mean that the outcome of the decision must be the same for all the churches in the federation. If the churches together decide that a matter of the “churches in common” can be left to the local churches, then the decision is made by the churches together, but the outcome is not necessarily always the same locally.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To deny the appeal of the Chilliwack CanRC re: GS 2016 Art. 87.

ADOPTED

Article 64 – Request of Hamilton-Blessings re: GS 1983 Art. 145 (expression “confessions” in liturgical forms)

1. Material

- 1.1 The request of the Hamilton-Blessing CanRC to revise the decision of GS 1983 Art. 145 (8.6.7.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Dunnville, Guelph-Emmanuel, and Grand Rapids (8.6.7.1.1–3)

2. Admissibility

- 2.1 Since the matter concerns a decision of a synod which involves changing the wording of some liturgical forms, it is a matter of the churches in common (CO Art. 56) and thus admissible.

3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 1983 considered the following in Art. 145 regarding changes to the Form for Baptism: “In order to avoid misunderstanding, the word ‘creeds’ in the second question should be replaced by ‘confessions.’” Regarding changes to the Form for Profession of Faith, synod considered the following: “In the first question the word ‘creeds’ should be replaced by ‘confessions.’” Both changes were adopted.
- 3.2 The Hamilton-Blessings CanRC summarizes its request this way: “In light of new research, the emergence of a new ecumenical landscape, and the conviction that previous appeals to synods (1986, 1989, 1992) were inadequately considered and therefore unjustly denied, the Blessings Christian Church requests a revision of the 1983 (Cloverdale) General Synod’s decision to modify the questions in the liturgical forms for Baptism and Profession of Faith by replacing the phrase ‘articles of the Christian faith’ (or the tentatively approved ‘Apostles’ Creed’) with the term ‘confessions.’”
- 3.3 Hamilton-Blessings took it upon itself to send its request for revision to all the churches in the federation shortly before the deadline for submissions to General Synod Edmonton. It did so with a cover email stating “Due to the late hour with which these documents are being submitted to General Synod, we are sending them to all the consistories in order to provide a little time, however short, to provide feedback to General Synod if so desired.”
- 3.4 Hamilton-Blessings makes a point of distinguishing its submission as a “request for revision” and not an “appeal” in footnote 13: “The language of ‘request for revision’ is invoked rather than ‘appeal’ because ‘appeal’ implies a request to a major assembly to rehear a case that has been rejected or denied by a minor assembly.”
- 3.5 Dunnville, Guelph-Emmanuel, and Grand Rapids complain that the submission came too late for the churches to interact with it meaningfully. Dunnville suggests that a revision of this nature should go the route of the ecclesiastical assemblies on the principle that, “churches must be given adequate time to interact.” Grand Rapids observes that “this matter has not served at General Synod in 27 years” and adduces that, “in general, the churches do not have an issue with the 1983 decision.”

4. Considerations

- 4.1 The Hamilton-Blessings CanRC is clearly requesting a revision of a decision of a past synod in order to change some wording in several adopted liturgical forms. Regarding changes to liturgical forms, GS 2013 decided the following: “To decide that all requests concerning factual errors, grammatical, typographical, or other minor stylistic matters throughout the *Book of Praise* may be addressed by individuals or churches to the SCBP for its consideration and possible suggestion for change to a future synod. All requests concerning other changes to the contents of the *Book of Praise* (e.g. translation of confessions, changes to metrical psalms, rewording and rhyming of psalms and hymns, changes to liturgical forms) need to arise out of the churches in the ecclesiastical way, namely from consistory to classis to regional synod and general synod” (GS 2013 Art.

125 Obs. 4.5). It is true that on appeal GS 2016 decided to direct churches to return to the previous practice of submitting hymns to the SCBP but the rest of GS 2013's decision remains unaffected (see GS 2016 Art. 122).

- 4.2 While Hamilton-Blessings consistently calls its submission a “request for revision,” and makes a point of not calling it an “appeal,” the Church Order does not speak of “request for revision.” The Church Order speaks only of two avenues to bring a matter forward to a general synod: the way of appeal (CO Art. 31) or the way of presenting a new matter through the ecclesiastical route (consistory to classis to regional synod to general synod, CO Art. 30). GS 2013 (Art. 99, Cons. 3.1) clarified that even when the new matter is dealt with by the churches in common, it must first travel the ecclesiastical route through the minor assemblies.
- 4.3 Changing the liturgical forms in the way Hamilton-Blessings requests will affect all the churches and thus all the churches should have ample opportunity to meaningfully interact with this request. Hamilton-Blessings implicitly understands this principle for it took it upon itself to send out its request for revision to all the churches seeking their input only it was too late for that to be done in any substantive way. Hamilton-Blessings is to be commended for wanting to involve all the churches in their quest, however, the Church Order indicates that the way to garner the input of the churches is via the ecclesiastical route (CO Art. 30; see Cons. 4.1).
- 4.4 The fact that the decision of GS 1983 has served in the churches for more than 30 years is also significant. During all that time, the 1983 decision was honoured as settling and binding. Also for this reason, the request of Hamilton-Blessings should come in the form of an overture that follows the ecclesiastical route (see Cons. 4.2 and 4.3), seeking support. In this way, all the churches will have ample time and opportunity to interact with it through this filtering process.
- 4.5 The above considerations will address the concerns of Dunnville, Guelph-Emmanuel, and Grand Rapids.

5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 To not accede to the request of the church at Hamilton-Blessings but to point it to consider the appropriate process as per Considerations 4.1, 4.2, and 4.4.

ADOPTED

During discussion, the following **amendment** was moved, seconded, and **defeated**:

To add at the end of recommendation 4.4

Much care ought to be exercised that the vital role of our reformed confessions in church and family life is not minimized.

Article 65 – Appeal of Neerlandia-(North) re: GS 2016 Art. 111 (NIV2011)

1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal to GS 2019 from the Neerlandia-(North) CanRC re: GS 2016 Art. 111 (8.6.10.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 Neerlandia-(North) believes that GS 2016 erred by not giving a strong warning against the use of the NIV2011 and asks General Synod to recommend to the churches that the NIV2011 not be used because it contains problematic texts.
- 2.2 GS 2016 (Art. 111 Cons. 3.3) stated that “regarding texts pertaining to office” only two texts remain problematic and noted that “Brampton-Grace has a valid point when it states that the NIV2011 should not be rejected on the basis of two problematic texts”. Neerlandia considers this “a very subjective argument” and posits the hypothetical question, “How many problematic texts now need to be in place before a translation can be rejected.”
- 2.4 GS 2016 (Art. 111 Cons. 3.5) stated that “The recommendations of the CBT and the decisions of synods ultimately are advisory, as is evident in the way a synod does not prescribe but recommends translations for use in the churches”.
- 2.5 GS 2016 adopted the recommendation “To acknowledge that while it may not be possible to recommend the NIV2011, a general synod may not forbid churches to use it if they so desire.” (GS 2016 Art. 111 Rec. 4.3)

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Neerlandia-(North) argues that “we should aim for using the best possible [translation]” and that “we have a Committee for Bible Translations so that the resources of the church can be pooled together so that the best translations are in use.” Neerlandia-(North)’s argument implicitly acknowledges that translations are not perfect. A decision which takes all considerations into account in a balanced way will need to be made when determining which are the “best translations.”
- 3.2 The issue of so-called problematic texts in Bible translations is not limited to the NIV2011. GS 1977 Art. 104, Obs. 4 noted that the Committee mandated to review the RSV “indicates that there are unscriptural and evolutionistic influences” and cites five problematic texts regarding the Holy Spirit, three texts where the evolutionistic view could be suspected and notes that the RSV has unnecessary contradictions between some texts. GS 1977 Art. 104 Obs. 5 noted that the Committee concluded “that it is afraid that the RSV shows evidence of unscriptural influence.” Despite these considerations, GS 1977 decided to “To leave the use of the Revised Standard Version - though with discretion and care - in the freedom of the Churches.”
- 3.3 Neerlandia-(North) believes that permitting the use of a translation with two problematic texts seems to be a contradiction of the consistory’s responsibility to ward off false doctrine (CO Art. 27). However, Neerlandia-(North) does not provide any evidence that the particular problematic texts of the NIV2011 are inherently more likely to introduce false doctrine than the issues identified in other translations (see Consideration 3.2).
- 3.4 GS 2016 had no need to give “a strong warning against the use of the NIV2011,” since GS 2016 did not recommend the use of this translation and such a warning would have been redundant.
- 3.5 Even though GS 2016 went further than previous synods when it stated in Consideration 3.5 that “a general synod may not forbid churches to use it if they so desire” Neerlandia-(North) incorrectly concludes that this makes the CBT of no purpose.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To deny the appeal of the Neerlandia-(North) CanRC re: GS 2016 Art. 111.

ADOPTED

Article 66 – CBT (Committee for Bible Translations)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) (8.2.9.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Willoughby Heights (8.3.5.1), Fergus-North (8.3.5.2), Attercliffe (8.3.5.3), Grassie-Covenant (8.3.5.4)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 mandated the CBT to:
 - [4.1.1] To solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV;
 - [4.1.2] To submit worthy translation changes to the ESV editorial committee;
 - [4.1.3] To prepare and distribute a report to the churches in advance of the next Synod.
- 2.2 The Committee consists of two members, the Revs. Dave de Boer and Rodney Vermeulen. The Rev. de Boer has completed nine years on the committee and is scheduled to retire. Therefore, the committee requests that General Synod release Rev. de Boer and appoint a replacement.
- 2.3 The CBT did not receive any materials or inquiries from the churches and did not pass on any suggested translation changes to the ESV editorial committee.
- 2.4 The CBT reports that an updated version of the ESV2011, the ESV2016, has been provided by the publisher. The CBT reports on changes to 29 verses which were incorporated into the ESV2016, of which the most significant change was to Genesis 3:16. The opinion of the CBT is that the translation of this text in the ESV2011 is to be preferred.
- 2.6 The CBT, on its own initiative, provided some information about the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) but noted that it had not done a study or evaluation of the CSB and did not provide a recommendation for or against the use of this translation in the churches.
- 2.7 The CBT recommends that General Synod maintain the CBT as a resource for the churches with the same mandate as given by GS 2016.
- 2.8 The Willoughby Heights CanRC appreciates the information provided by the CBT on the CSB but notes that this was not part of the Committee's mandate and recommends that General Synod mandate the CBT to serve the churches on Bible translation matters brought to the attention of the Committee by a church.
- 2.9 The Fergus-North CanRC wonders if the CBT's original mandate from GS 2010, i.e. "to thoroughly evaluate the updated NIV translation when it is released in 2011" (GS 2010 Art. 72) has been fulfilled. It suggests that as the substantive portion of the CBT report issued to the churches in 2011 is under 10 pages while the 1995 CBT comparison of the NASB, NIV and NKJV was 235 pages, a thorough evaluation has not been completed.

It therefore requests that General Synod mandate the CBT to complete the study mandated by GS 2010.

- 2.10 The Attercliffe CanRC endorses the CBT report and agrees with the CBT's conclusion regarding Genesis 3:16 and considers the other changes to be less significant.
- 2.11 The Grassie-Covenant CanRC recommends that the CBT suggest to the publisher of the ESV that changes should only be made once every generation and that the translation of Genesis 3:16 in the ESV2016 be reverted to the wording in ESV2011 in the next edition. Grassie-Covenant also believes it would be worthwhile for General Synod to mandate the CBT to further investigate the CSB.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The Committee has fulfilled its mandate from GS 2016.
- 3.2 The Committee provided some general information about the history, background and translation methodology of the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) on its own initiative but has not recommended to General Synod that it be mandated to further evaluate the CSB. Since only one church considered it worthwhile to further investigate the CSB, General Synod does not believe this warrants further study at this time.
- 3.3 The recommendation of the Grassie-Covenant CanRC that the translation of Genesis 3:16 in the ESV2016 be reverted to the wording in ESV2011 in the next edition is a matter that falls within the mandate of the CBT.
- 3.4 The Fergus-North CanRC requests that General Synod mandate the CBT to complete the study of the NIV2011 mandated by GS 2010, which it believes was not completed. By only providing a comparative page count of the CBT's report and quoting statistics regarding the number of changes between the NIV1984 and NIV2011 (see Obs. 2.9) without any consideration of the significance of those changes, Fergus-North does not sufficiently prove that the evaluation conducted by the CBT and issued to the churches in 2011 was insufficient.
- 3.5 The Willoughby Heights CanRC is correct when it states that the CBT's review of the CSB was not within the mandate given to it by GS 2016. It appropriately requests that General Synod mandate the CBT to serve the churches as a resource for Bible translation matters brought to the attention of the Committee by a church, rather than on its own initiative.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the committee for its work;
- 4.2 To thank the Rev. D de Boer for his work on this committee;
- 4.3 To mandate the Committee for Bible Translation (CBT):
 - 4.3.1 To solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV;
 - 4.3.2 To submit worthy translation suggestions to the ESV editorial committee, including recommending changing the wording of Genesis 3:16 back to the ESV2011 version;
 - 4.3.3 To serve the churches as a resource for Bible translation matters brought to the attention of the Committee by a church;
 - 4.3.4 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work.

- 4.3.5 To prepare and distribute a report to the churches 6 months in advance of the next General Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 67 – Days of Prayer

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC and the Edmonton-Providence CanRC regarding days of prayer dated September 27, 2018 (8.2.12.1)
- 1.2 Supplemental report from these two churches regarding days of prayer dated November 17, 2018 (8.2.12.2)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 appointed Edmonton-Providence and Burlington-Rehoboth as the churches to implement the provisions of CO Art. 54.
- 2.2 The main report indicates that no church requested the organization of a day of prayer. The supplemental report indicates that, after the main report had already been submitted to the churches ahead of Synod, Tintern Spring Creek requested the two churches to organize a day of prayer. The supplemental report states that, following separate discussion of the request by each church, “Both Councils interpreted the request as being of a serious nature but yet not an acute or urgent affliction threatening the life of the Church. Therefore the conclusion was that the request did not fit the criteria stated in Article 54 CO, namely, ‘In times of war, general calamities, and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the churches.’ Therefore the decision was not to proceed with the request.”

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Both reports indicate that the churches appointed have been active and responsive in fulfilling their mandate given by GS 2016.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express gratitude to the Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC and the Edmonton-Providence CanRC for their reporting.
- 4.2 To reappoint Burlington-Rehoboth and Edmonton-Providence to implement CO Art. 54 as needed.
- 4.3 To mandate Burlington-Rehoboth and Edmonton-Providence to submit a report to the churches on their activities 6 months prior to the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 68 – CCCNA (Committee for Contact with Churches in North America) - General**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) (8.2.3.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the following church: Dunnville (8.3.2.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 49) decided concerning the CCCNA:
 - [4.1.1] 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;
 - [4.1.2] To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in the Americas;
 - [4.1.3] To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in the Americas;
 - [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.
- 2.2 The CCCNA maintained its Subcommittees East and West. Subcommittee West was responsible for contacts with the RCUS, RPCNA and NAPARC. Subcommittee East was responsible for contacts with the ARPC, ERQ, FRCNA, HRC, KPCA and OPC.
- 2.3 Minutes of the subcommittee meetings were exchanged via email to promote good communication and mutual scrutiny.
- 2.4 At least two members of each subcommittee attended NAPARC in 2016, 2017 and 2018. During NAPARC, these members met with their counter-parts.
- 2.5 The Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt and br. H. VanDelden have completed their terms in 2019, but due to the recommendations of the combined CRCA-CCCNA report to Synod, the CCCNA recommends that these brothers be reappointed to the CCCNA since their significant years of experience would be of great assistance to the committee should Synod adopt the recommendations of the combined report.
- 2.6 The CCCNA recommends that Synod continue the committee's mandate 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 **5** months prior to the convening of the next general synod.
- 2.7 Dunnville recommends that Synod not accept the CCCNA's recommended change since the churches need adequate time to respond to reports. Dunnville argues that providing an exception to one committee may result in the same request from other committees and contends that the CCCNA does not provide convincing reasons for the change.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCCNA carried out its mandate diligently, especially considering that four additional churches (ARPC, FRCNA, HRC, KPCA) have requested to interact with the CanRC via the committee.

- 3.2 The annual NAPARC meetings and meetings with delegates of the other churches at NAPARC occur in November. Changing the number of months that the CCCNA has to report on its work from 6 to 5 months would allow the committee to report on the most recent meetings at NAPARC.
- 3.3 A one-month delay for the CCCNA does not significantly impact the ability of the churches to respond to the CCCNA report and the delay is reasonable when measured against its benefit.
- 3.4 An exception to the CCCNA for the time allowed for reporting to the churches does not need to be given to other committees, considering they do not have to deal with the same time constraints.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt and br. H. VanDelden for their work on the CCCNA;
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):
 - 4.2.1 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;
 - 4.2.2 To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in North America;
 - 4.2.3 To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in North America;
 - 4.2.4 To report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next general synod, and to present to the churches a report of its work 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 69 – Closing Devotions

The chairman made some announcements regarding agenda items and housekeeping matters.

The Rev. Bouwman led in evening devotions. He read Revelation 1 and spoke some words of meditation and encouragement. He had those present sing psalm 97:1,4,5 and then led in prayer, remembering, among others, the RCUS, and the GKv and CanRC.

Synod was adjourned until 9:00am Monday.

Day 5 — Morning Session
Monday, May 20, 2019

Article 70 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman read Psalm 119:25-32, spoke some words, led in prayer, and had those present sing Psalm 119:10,11,12. He noted all synod members were present.

Article 71 – Adoption of Acts

A question was raised regarding the position of amendments in an article of the Acts. Past practice has been to report matters chronologically, and thus amendments made on the floor of a synod in plenary session would be recorded first in an article. It was objected that this draws undue attention to the amendment. The first clerk proposed that amendments be placed at the end of the article. This suggestion was discussed and adopted, to be applied to all the records of the acts of GS 2019.

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 72 – Housekeeping matters

Some housekeeping matters were dealt with. Among others Synod was informed the Rev. Dr. William den Hollander and the chairman of the Board of Governors, the Rev. Richard Aasman, together with his wife, would be joining Synod for supper.

Synod was adjourned until 2:00pm for committee work.

Day 5 — Afternoon Session
Monday, May 20, 2019

Article 73 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Hymn 14:1,2. He noted all synod members were present.

Article 74 – Appeal of T. Bosma re: RSE May 2018 art. 7

This matter was dealt with by Synod in closed-restricted session, with credentialed delegates from sister churches present.

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on an appeal from br. T. Bosma (8.6.4.1). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 75 – HRC (Heritage Reformed Congregations)

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) (8.2.3.1). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 76 – LRCA (Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford)

1. Material

1.1 Appeal from the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA) (8.6.6.1)

2. Admissibility

2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 53) agreed with GS 2013's observation (Art. 62) that "The churches of the Canadian Reformed federation set the agenda for general synod. No church has asked us to address this issue. Synod also accepts correspondence received from churches with which we are in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The letter from the LRCA does not fulfil either criterion."

3. Recommendation

That Synod declare the appeal inadmissible.

ADOPTED

Article 77 – Hamilton Blessings re: RSE Nov. 2018 Art. 8 (amendment to CO Art. 55)

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on an appeal from the Hamilton-Blessings CanRC re: RSE Nov. 2018 Art. 8 (8.6.8.1). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 78 – Motion to change an already adopted act of GS 2019

The following was moved by the Rev. Holtvlüwer and seconded by the Rev. Janssen:

To insert into Article 68 of GS 2019 an additional recommendation as follows (numbered 4.2.4. with the understanding that the old 4.2.4 becomes 4.2.5):

4.2.4 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work.

Ground: GS 2019, when dealing with the decision on the General Fund (Art. 45), decided this should be done.

Following discussion the motion was

ADOPTED

Article 79 – KCPA-K (Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) regarding the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K) (8.2.3.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the following church: Attercliffe (8.3.2.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 26) decided:
 - [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 Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) to continue dialogue with the KPCA-K where feasible, with a view to getting to know the KPCA-K better over time.
- 2.2 Contact between the CanRC and the KPCA-K was attempted by the CCCNA (under synod mandate) in the early 2000s but, due largely to the language barrier, bore little fruit and formal attempts were discontinued by GS 2007.
- 2.3 Informal acquaintances with the KPCA-K began to emerge at NAPARC meetings. This resulted with an invitation to attend their 30th General Assembly in 2014.
- 2.4 Two bi-lateral meetings with their inter-church relations committee were held at NAPARC 2014 and 2015.
- 2.5 There was no dialogue or contact with the KPCA-K from the Summer 2016 to the Fall 2018. The hope was that a bi-lateral meeting would be held at NAPARC 2018.
- 2.6 The Attercliffe CanRC agrees with the committee's recommendation to continue dialogue with the KPCA-K to get to know this church better over time.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee has been diligent in completing their mandate.
- 3.2 Although there has been minimal contact with the KPCA-K, the little contact that they have had has been positive.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide to mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):

- 4.1 To continue dialogue with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K) where feasible, with a view to getting to know the KPCA-K better over time;

- 4.2 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 80 – RPCNA (Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) regarding the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) (8.2.3.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the following church: Attercliffe (8.3.2.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 90) decided:
- [4.1] To express gratitude for the Reformed doctrine and practice evident in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA), evident through the contact between the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) and the Inter-church Relations committee (IRC) of the RPCNA;
- [4.2] That the CanRC not enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);
- [4.3] That the CCCNA interact with the RPCNA at the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).
- 2.2 The CanRC does not have EF with the RPCNA; they are a member of NAPARC and the ICRC.
- 2.3 The RPCNA has formal fraternal relations (EF) with these sister churches of the CanRC: FCS (in North America); OPC; RCUS and the URCNA.
At the invitation of the RPCNA, members of CCCNA attended the RPCNA synod in Marion, IN, in June 2017 and June 2018. The CCCNA and IRC interacted at the NAPARC meeting on November 17, 2017.
- 2.4 The CCCNA has recommended to GS 2010 and GS 2016 that EF be extended to the RPCNA. The recommendation was not adopted at GS 2016 because of two issues: The practice of ordaining female deacons and the exegetical defense thereof (GS 2016, Art. 90, Cons. 3.2), and reservations about the place and function of The Testimony (GS 2016, Art. 90, Cons. 3.3 and 3.5).
- 2.5 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, Cons. 3.5, Rec. 4.1)
- 2.6 The RPCNA have congregations or preaching points in close proximity to CanRCs in Ottawa, Elora, Fergus, Guelph and Denver. Several of these have expressed a desire for progression towards unity.
- 2.7 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.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee has been diligent in completing their mandate.
- 3.2 The committee gives an informative report about the RPCNA.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide to mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):

- 4.1 To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA);
- 4.2 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of next general synod.

ADOPTED

Synod was adjourned until 7:00pm for committee work.

Day 5 — Evening Session
Monday, May 20, 2019

Article 81 – Reopening

Synod reopened in open plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Psalm 134. He called the roll and noted all synod members were present.

Article 82 – CRTS – Professor NT

The chairman spoke some words of welcome to the Rev. Dr. William den Hollander, newly appointed professor of New Testament, and to the Rev. Richard Aasman, chairman of the Board of Governors.

Dr. den Hollander addressed Synod. He announced that he accepted the appointment. He explained that he, knowing himself to be a clay vessel, seeks strength in the power of Christ and knows he will find it there. His address can be found in Appendix 14.

The chairman expressed gratitude for the acceptance of the appointment. He noted the importance of the Word as our light in life, and how Dr. den Hollander has been entrusted with the task of teaching young men to open their eyes to behold wondrous things in God's Word and thus to proclaim that Word.

The chairman then read a letter from the Rev. Dr. Gerhard Visscher, current professor of New Testament. The text of his letter can be found in Appendix 15.

The chairman expressed gratitude for the work of Dr. Visscher. He indicated a letter would be sent to Dr. Visscher and a token of appreciation would be given to him.

The Rev. Richard Aasman then spoke some words of gratitude, first for the CRTS, next for the labour of Dr. Visscher, and finally for the fact that Dr. den Hollander had been found to serve next.

The chairman led in prayer and then had those present sing Hymn 85:1,3.

Article 83 – OPC – Letter of Greetings

The Rev. Jack W. Sawyer had been delegated to attend the General Synod of the CanRC on behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Personal circumstances that arose during the time of Synod prevented him from coming. Hence the Rev. Holtvlüwer read the speech prepared by the Rev. Sawyer. The history of the OPC was briefly described, followed by a description of ministries and current activities of the OPC. For the text of his speech, see Appendix 16.

Article 84 – CRTS – Board of Governors

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Board of Governors (BoG) of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS), (8.2.7.1), Minister nomination for BoG – RSW (8.1.2), Minister nomination for BoG – RSE (8.1.4.), BoG nomination letter for non-minister (8.2.7.2),
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Willoughby Heights (8.3.4.1), Coaldale (8.3.4.2), Toronto-Bethel (8.3.4.3), Brampton-Grace (8.3.4.4)

- 1.3 The letter received from Coaldale was incomplete and not signed and therefore declared inadmissible.

2. Observations

- 2.1 The report of the Board of Governors (hereafter “the Board”) provides an overview of its effort to ensure the continued operation of Theological College in Hamilton (CRTS). With the faithful support of the churches the work, training, and instruction at CRTS has continued without interruption since last general synod. The Board appreciates the contribution of non-teaching staff to the smooth running of CRTS, Since GS 2016, 12 students have graduated with an MDiv degree, 2 students with a BTh degree and 1 student with a Theological Studies diploma.
- 2.2 The Lord took to himself Dr. J. DeJong on April 15, 2017. Mrs. Faber, the widow of Dr. J. Faber, was also taken into glory on June 30, 2018.
- 2.3 Dr. G.H.Visscher has informed the Board that he will retire D.V. after the 2019-20 academic year. Therefore the Board declared a vacancy in the New Testament department beginning September 2020.
- 2.4 The faculty is active in visiting the churches in the federation as well as participating in teaching and speaking engagements overseas. Since 2016 there have been a number of faculty publications.
- 2.5 The support of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) for CRTS is reflected not only in the students they send, but also in the significant financial contributions they make.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 In 2013 CRTS received accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). This accreditation is valid until spring 2020. CRTS submitted two reports to ATS since that time, which were accepted.
- 2.8 On September 6, 2017, the Board, faculty, staff, and other invited participants held a strategic planning session. At this session, the existing strategic plan was reviewed and refreshed, a presentation on distance education was given, and there was development of new key thrusts and initiatives to be worked on over the next few years.
- 2.9 Since the last Synod, the Board 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, the Board hereby submits it for approval. The following is observed:
- 2.9.1 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 (g) to appoint or remove the Principal;*
- 2.9.2 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.

- 2.9.3 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.
- 2.9.4 In recent years CRTS with Synod involvement, has transitioned from a rotational system (new principal every three years) to a more permanent system (with a Principal appointed for up to 9 years (3 renewable terms for 3 years each). 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.
- 2.9.5 The involvement of a General Synod is, however, somewhat cumbersome with respect to the implementation of the new system for the following reasons.
- 2.9.5.1 The end of each of the three years do not necessarily coincide well with the timing of General Synod with respect to re-appointment.
- 2.9.5.2 One can imagine situations in which the need for a Synod to terminate a faculty member's role as a principal would be problematic.
- 2.9.5.3 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?"
- 2.9.6 Recommendations
- 2.9.6.1 That Synod agree that, with a view to the smooth operation of the Seminary, the Board should be allowed to execute the power to 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.
- 2.9.6.2 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.
- 2.9.6.3 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).
- 2.10 The Board responded to GS 2016's interaction with the proposed basis of the Statement of Institutional Purpose (SIP) "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." GS 2016 took over the proposal of the Dunnville CanRC 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". At the same time GS 2016 motioned

the Board toward Toronto's suggestion that the SIP should be an internal CRTS document. In conclusion, the Board is in agreement with the advice of Toronto, that the SIP is best understood as an internal policy document. With respect to the SIP, the Board informs Synod 2019 that it

- [a.] Adopts the word, "CRTS submits to 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.

2.11 The Board responded to GS 2016 (and Toronto)'s recommendation to mandate a comprehensive review of tenure policy of CRTS and provide a proposal at the next Synod. It proposes to maintain the current procedure of granting tenure to professors.

2.12 The Board recommends:

- [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. G. 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.
- 2.13 Willoughby Heights has no concerns with Synod deciding as the Board report recommends concerning Bylaw 12. This church presents two alternative options.
- 2.14 Toronto-Bethel requests Synod not to accede to the request of the Board to change Bylaw 12. They question whether the Board correctly understands the current bylaws. It is their understanding that the by-law as worded now does not provide the authority or right of a General Synod to override, disagree with or otherwise interfere with a Board decision on the appointment or removal of a Principal. Rather, the bylaw establishes that the Board will seek the advice of Synod with respect to the appointment of the Principal and his power, function, and duty. It would seem that then the expectation was that the advice would be sought, with proper grounds, and rationale, and that advice would be given, which if properly set out, conveyed and considered, would be given serious consideration. This understanding of the bylaw would suggest that although the power remains with the Board with respect to the appointment of the Principal, there should be substantive and respectful dialogue around the matters for which advice is being sought. Given this understanding, the concern regarding the timing of Synod would be alleviated as well. The Board has the ability to make appointments and such during any 3-year interval between general synods, which could be made provisionally, subject to substantive dialogue and advice subsequently being sought. If Toronto-Bethel’s understanding is correct then no changes to the bylaws should be required.
- 2.15 Brampton-Grace has a request (which they called an “appeal”) similar to Toronto-Bethel. It also addresses the concern of the Board about the cumbersome aspects of seeking advice of Synod and recommends that the Board be requested that CH 4.5. be changed to add a point 2.5. similar CH 5.1, 3.2 to have an interim appointment until General Synod has had the opportunity to offer advice.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Synod notes with thankfulness that the work of CRTS could continue without interruption between GS 2016 and GS 2019.
- 3.2 Synod notes with the sadness the passing away of Dr. J. DeJong and Mrs. W. Faber into glory.
- 3.3 Synod is grateful for the faithful service of Dr. G.H. Visscher as professor of New Testament over the past 19 years and as principal of CRTS for 9 years.
- 3.4 Synod is grateful to the FRCA for their continued involvement in CRTS, as well as their prayerful and significant financial support.
- 3.5 Synod notes with gratitude that the Pastoral Training Program continues to be beneficial for the students and the churches.

- 3.6 The Board request to approve all other decisions and actions of the Board and its committees is a legal requirement in accordance with the College Act.
- 3.7 Toronto-Bethel and Brampton-Grace's understanding is correct and no changes to Bylaw 12 are required.
- 3.8 Brampton-Grace's recommendation that the Board be requested that Ch 4.5. be changed ought to be passed on to the Board for their consideration.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To receive this report and all its appendices;
- 4.2 To acknowledge the expiration of the terms of office of the Rev. J. Ludwig, the Rev. R. Aasman, and br. B. Hordyk and to express gratitude for their work;
- 4.3 Pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of By-Law 3
 - 4.3.1 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:
 - 4.3.1.1 The following brothers were appointed by Synod 2016 and are eligible to be reappointed for two more terms: from RSW, Rev. J. Poppe and Rev. J. Slaa; from RSE, Rev. J. Louwerse;
 - 4.3.1.2 The following brother was appointed by Synod 2013 and is eligible for reappointment for one more term: from RSE, Rev. M. VanLuik;
 - 4.3.2 To reappoint brs. K. Van Veen and P. Vandersluis as Governors for a term lasting until the second subsequent General Synod;
 - 4.3.3 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;
 - 4.3.4 To appoint br. Alan Datema (alternate br. Brian VanderHout) as one new non-ministerial Governor for a term lasting from the date of appointment until the third subsequent General Synod;
 - 4.3.5 To appoint the Rev. C.J. VanderVelde (alternate the Rev. M. Jagt) as one ministerial governor from RSE;
 - 4.3.6 To appoint the Rev. R. Schouten (alternate the Rev. D. deBoer) as one ministerial governor from RSW;
- 4.4 To request the churches to continue to remember in their prayers the needs of Mrs. G. Deddens, Mrs. M. DeJong, Dr. and Mrs. N.H. Gootjes and Prof. J. Geertsema;
- 4.5 To appoint Dr. J. VanVliet as Principal for the years 2019-2022;
- 4.6 To not approve the change to the By-laws described in this report;
- 4.7 To maintain the current procedure of granting tenure to professors;
- 4.8 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;
- 4.9 To express gratitude for the support from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
- 4.10 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;

- 4.11 To acknowledge with gratitude the financial contributions of the Women's Savings Action to the well-being of the Seminary.

ADOPTED with members of the Board of Governors abstaining.

Article 85 – Overture – RSE & RSW on licensure (CO article 21)

1. Material

1.1 Overtures

1.1.1 Overture Regional Synod East (8.4.3) re: Licensure proposal

1.1.2 Overture Regional Synod West (8.4.4) re: Licensure proposal

1.2 Letter from the following church: Barrhead (8.5.11)

2. Admissibility

- 2.1 Both overtures have followed the ecclesiastical route (CO Art. 30), therefore both overtures are admissible.

3. Observations

- 3.1 RSE Nov. 2018 recommends the adoption of a proposal to permit seminary students to pursue licensure following two years of study in the M.Div. program.
- 3.2 RSW 2018 recommends the adoption of a proposal to permit seminary students to pursue licensure following two years of study in the M.Div. program.
- 3.3 Barrhead is in full agreement with the proposal of RSW 2018.
- 3.4 Both regional synods have submitted similar proposals that originated from the same source. However RSE 2018 has made a number of amendments making the proposals slightly different from each other.
- 3.5 RSE Nov. 2018 (Observation h) amended the proposal of Classis Ontario West May 2018 (COW 2018), from "CRTS rejoices to be of service to the URCNA," to "CRTS enjoys being of service to the URCNA."
- 3.6 RSE Nov. 2018 (Recommendation b.iv) amended the proposal of COW May 2018, from "That in the summer immediately following classical permission or licensure—whether this be after either the student's second or third year of studies" to "That in the summer immediately following classical permission or licensure—whether this be after the student's second or third year of studies."
- 3.7 RSE Nov. 2018 (Recommendation b.iv) amended the proposal of COW May 2018, from "the student must follow a summer internship during which..." to "the student must complete a summer internship during which..."
- 3.8 RSE Nov. 2018 (Recommendation b.v) amended the proposal of COW May 2018, from regarding the student's progress and his suitability for ministry," to "regarding the student's progress and suitability for ministry."
- 3.9 RSE Nov. 2018 (Recommendation b.vi) amended the proposal of COW May 2018, from "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," to "That the

license to speak an edifying word be valid for 12 months, ordinarily renewable twice if a written request is made.”

3.10 According to the Acts of RSW Nov 2018, the following amendments are listed under recommendations:

[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.”

4. Considerations

- 4.1 All the above amendments made by RSE Nov. 2018 are of a cosmetic nature and do nothing to change the intent of the original proposal. There are no significant improvements that justify changing the original proposal.
- 4.2 RSW 2018 recommends that the Recommendation 3.b.viii now read, “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, or by a minister recommended by the Senate and appointed by the Board of Governors.” Since licensure after this decision can now take place after the second year of study, the number of sermons needing approval by the Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS will increase significantly.
- 4.3 RSW 2018 recommends dropping the condition that a “student desire to enter gospel ministry, if called to such by the churches” (Recommendation 3.b.iii of the overtures) in order to receive licensure to preach. It is possible for a student to not have a desire to enter gospel ministry when they begin seminary training. However, it is not correct to receive licensure if that desire is not present.

5. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 5.1 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;
 - 5.1.2 That this permission or licensure be granted under the following conditions:
 - 5.1.2.1 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;
 - 5.1.2.2 That the student sustain an appropriate ecclesiastical exam and supply whatever documents the classis may require;
 - 5.1.2.3 That the student desire to enter gospel ministry, if called to such by the churches;
 - 5.1.2.4 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);
- 5.1.2.5 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;
- 5.1.2.6 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;
- 5.1.2.7 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);
- 5.1.2.8 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, or by a minister recommended by the Senate and appointed by the Board of Governors;
- 5.1.3 That General Synod mandate the Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding:
- 5.1.3.1 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.

ADOPTED

Article 86 – OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) regarding the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) (8.2.3.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the following church: Attercliffe (8.3.2.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 61) decided:

- [4.1] To thank the LORD for the way in which the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) actively provides a faithful Reformed witness to the gospel;
- [4.2] To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the OPC under the adopted rules.
- 2.2 In 2016 and 2018, committee members attended the General Assembly of the OPC (GA-OPC) and brought fraternal greetings. A fraternal greeting was sent by letter in 2017. A meeting with the CEIR was held in 2016.
- 2.3 At the meeting with the CEIR at NAPARC 2016 the CanRC highlighted the decisions of the GS-CanRC 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.
- 2.4 At the meeting with the CEIR at NAPARC 2017 a substantive discussion took place on the following items:
- 2.4.1 The CanRC mentioned that they have encouraged awareness of the Grand Forks OPC, ND that the Bismarck OPC, ND is overseeing.
- 2.4.2 The dismissal of a member of the ICRC can only be initiated by a member church of ICRC based on a decision by their major assembly. The OPC brought this motion during the ICRC 2017. The CanRC expressed thanks for the work of the OPC at the ICRC, while the OPC expressed thanks for CanRC work on the matter and for supporting their motion at ICRC.
- 2.4.3 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.
- 2.4.4 The Canadian churches in the OPC are expected to form a presbytery in the near future.
- 2.4.5 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.
- 2.5 The OPC informed the CCCNA via a letter in January of 2018 that they had updated their rules for EF.
- 2.6 The OPC informed the CCCNA via a letter in August of 2018 that their 85th General Assembly had decided to elect a committee to propose specific linguistic changes to the doctrinal standards of the OPC.
- 2.7 The Attercliffe CanRC wishes to stress that the CCCNA should continue discussions on points of doctrine where we continue to differ on, and continue to build each other up.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCCNA has fulfilled its mandate regarding the OPC.
- 3.2 The actions taken by the OPC confirm their allegiance to the Word of God and the Reformed confessions.
- 3.3 The presence of an OPC presbytery in Canada could give opportunity for our classes to send delegates to their meetings.

- 3.4 The CCCNA has already interacted with the OPC on the matters raised by the church at Attercliffe. GS 2016 Art. 59 Cons. 3.4 should also be kept in mind.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) under the adopted rules.
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):
- 4.2.1 To send a delegation to the general assemblies of the OPC at least once every three years;
- 4.2.2 To encourage neighbouring classes to interact with the new presbytery in Canada when it is formed;
- 4.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 87 – IRB (Reformed Churches in Brazil)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) – Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) (8.2.2.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the following church: Attercliffe (8.3.1.9)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 88) decided concerning the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB):
- [4.1] To express gratitude for the continued growth evident in the Reformed Churches in Brazil;
- [4.2] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) under the adopted rules;
- [4.3] To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and provide in encouragement to these churches.
- 2.2. From the CRCA report the following:
- 2.2.1. The CRCA was very active in their contact with the IRB, they received the acts from 27th, 29th, and 30th Concilio. The CRCA sent a letter with contact information and a description of the CRCA work to the IRB, including GS 2016 Art. 88.
- 2.3. The CRCA had frequent interactions with the IRB and attended the 30th Concilio of the IRB.
- 2.4 At the 30th Concilio of the IRB, two candidates for the Ministry of the Word were examined. There was much joy seeing both candidates declared eligible for call. The joy was tempered somewhat by the grief of going through the process of dismissing Pr. Thiago 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 brother over a three-year period.

- 2.5 The IRB is a young federation and is excited about the Reformed faith. They place very high value on the confessions, seeing these as very important to know and to live by as churches. They consider themselves very young and look to the CanRC as a much older and wiser federation which has been blessed with the confessions that came out of the Reformation. They look to the CanRC for guidance (as for example in the approach to take with the GKv) and we can look to the IRB to be reminded of our rich heritage, to value it, and to hold on to it so that the CanRC remain a faithful federation. It is good to remember that the IRB has EF with only two federations: the CanRC and the GKv.
- 2.6 There are three specific concerns the IRB has in which we as CanRC continue to give assistance.
 1. The training of men for the ministry of the Word and the training of men for the office of elder and deacon are mostly beyond the ability of the IRB at this time. They are too small to have the men and the resources able to do this. They are assisted in this work by the sending churches of Aldergrove and Hamilton largely through the work of their seminary, the John Calvin Institute.
 2. Financially, the IRB is a very poor federation. They desire assistance in supporting ministers of the Word, in paying for buildings to worship in, in looking after a seminary, in providing ministers with funds to buy books, and in their outreach efforts.
 3. Because the IRB is a young federation with many new believers, there continues to be a lot for these believers to learn. This is being worked on by the CanRC sending churches and the mission workers by way of regular teaching in various forms.

3. Considerations

- 3.1. The CRCA has fulfilled its mandate regarding the IRB.
- 3.2 In view of the needs in the IRB it is important to make every effort to maintain direct contact with them and to encourage the churches and their leaders.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express gratitude for the continued desire of the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) to grow in knowledge and faithfulness;
- 4.2 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the IRB under the adopted rules;
- 4.3 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.2.1 To use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to this federation of churches;
 - 4.2.2 To visit the IRB at least twice prior to the next general synod;
 - 4.2.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and Hamilton-Cornerstone CanRC (and their supporting churches), given their mission work in Brazil;

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

ADOPTED

Article 88 – GKv - Letter to the individual congregations and to synod

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a letter to the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) as per the decision recorded in GS 2019 Art. 41. The text of the letter was read and then discussed. The committee took the letter back for refinement.

Article 89 – Closing Devotions

A few housekeeping matters were addressed.

The Rev. Wielenga led in evening devotions. He read Psalm 121 and spoke some words of meditation. He had those present sing Ps. 121:1,4 and led in prayer, remembering, among others, the CRTS, the OPC, and the IRB.

Synod was adjourned until 9:00am the next day.

Day 6 — Morning Session

Tuesday, May 21, 2019

Article 90 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman read Psalm 119:32-40, spoke some words, led in prayer, and had those present sing Psalm 119:13,14,15. He noted all synod members were present.

Some announcements were made regarding housekeeping matters, among others that the official photo shoot would be at 10:00am.

Article 91 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Synod was adjourned until 3:30pm for committee work.

Day 6 — Afternoon Session
Tuesday, May 21, 2019

Article 92 – Reopening

Synod reopened in open plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Psalm 139:1,2. He noted all synod members were present. He made a comment about confidential materials needing to be destroyed.

Article 93 – Appeal of J. & M. DeBoer re: RSW 2017 Art. 5 (remarriage after divorce)

1. Material

1.1 Appeal to GS 2019 from br. and sr. J. and M. DeBoer re: RSW 2017 Art. 5 (8.6.5.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The appellants are of the conviction that any remarriage after divorce erodes what the Bible and the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage teaches about the permanence of marriage. They are of the opinion that their Consistory should not condone such marriages by asking God for his blessing in a public worship service. They request General Synod to decide that:
- 2.1.1 The solemnization of remarriage after divorce should not be performed in a public worship service;
- 2.1.2 Asking for a blessing over remarriages after divorce should not find a place in public prayers. They reason this should not be done to avoid burdening the conscience of and putting a stumbling block in the way of members “who hold to the biblical view of marriage as always has been confirmed by the Churches.”
- 2.2 The appellants requested RSW 2017 to:
- 2.2.1 declare the decision of Classis Pacific West (CPW) as unsubstantiated and therefore void [4.1]; and
- 2.2.2 point out to the Consistory of Langley CanRC (Langley) that in the case of a remarriage Article 63 CO applies and that solemnization of second marriages can be done privately and that praying over these marriages can be limited to this private ceremony [4.2].
- 2.3 In answering the appeal of br. and sr. DeBoer, RSW 2017:
- 2.3.1 Judged that Classis sufficiently interacted with the grounds the appeal is based on by referring to the exegesis done by the Langley Consistory (CPW Apr 2017 Art. 7 Obs. 2.4 & 2.5, Cons. 3.1).
- 2.3.2 Agreed with Langley when it said: “Brother, we do not judge you for coming to a different conclusion. Others in this church, in the Canadian Reformed Churches and in the church universal have come to the same conclusion as you. We respect this position and those who hold it.”
- 2.3.3 Stated that CO Art. 63 “does not allow for a consistory to condone marriages contrary to Scripture, regardless of whether they are solemnized in a worship service or a private ceremony. The consistory is to ensure that marriages take place ‘only in the Lord’ (1Cor. 7:39). Therefore, CO Art. 63 does not speak to the issue of congregational prayer for weddings. Further, it is in the freedom of the

consistory to determine whether – and, if so, how – to pray for individual marriages in the worship services, so as to promote harmony and unity in the church (cf. Romans 14 and 15). This is also the position of the Langley CanRC consistory, for it said: ‘We will continue to pray for God’s blessing for marriages that conform to God’s will as laid out in His Word.’ (letter dd. March 22, 2016).”

3. Considerations

- 3.1 It is not clear from the submission to General Synod that the appellants have been wronged by the decision of RSW 2017. In their appeal, the appellants repeat many of the grounds they raised with and which were answered by their Consistory, Classis, and Regional Synod West.
- 3.2 The concern raised by br. and sr. DeBoer that the Langley Consistory’s interpretation of the “exception clause” caters to the attempts of the church to be relevant in our present culture is incorrect. The position taken by Langley, as explained in its letter of Feb 20, 2016, is consistent with what has been defended by faithful churches of Christ ever since the time of the Reformation. Langley’s response is similar to that of John Calvin, Martin Bucer and the authors of the Westminster Confession of Faith, to name a few. Therefore, it was not wrong for RSW 2017 to agree with the conclusions of CPW Apr 2017.
- 3.3 General Synod considers the conclusions of RSW 2017, as quoted above in Observation 2.3.3, to be a sufficient answer to the appellants’ second request. Although the appellants express their disagreement with the conclusions of the Consistory and the responses of the broader assemblies, they do not prove that they have been wronged by these decisions.
- 3.4 Although the appellants are to be commended for their desire to uphold what the Bible teaches regarding these matters, it is clear that the appellants and the Consistory (supported by CPW Apr 2017 and RSW 2017) have come to different conclusions in their interpretation of the Biblical texts on divorce and remarriage. In this matter we can leave room for exegetical freedom and agree to disagree as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 to deny the appeal of br. and sr. DeBoer re: RSW 2017 Art. 5

ADOPTED with the following brothers abstaining: Janssen, Moes, Poppe, Slaa, VanSpronsen, Wielenga.

Confidential Article 94 – Appeal of S. Viersen re: RSW 2018 Art. 7 & 18 – confidential
Confidential as per GS 2019 Art. 150.

Confidential Article 95 – Appeal of Neerlandia-(North) re: RSW 2018 Art. 7 & 18 – confidential
Confidential as per GS 2019 Art. 150.

Synod was adjourned until 7:00pm for committee work.

Day 6 — Evening Session
Tuesday, May 21, 2019

Article 96 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Hymn 77. He called the roll and noted all synod members were present.

Article 97 – Motion to change already adopted acts of GS 2019

The following was moved by the Rev. Holtvliüwer and seconded by the Rev. Janssen:

- A.** To insert into Article 66 an additional recommendation as follows (numbered 4.3.4. with the understanding that the old 4.3.4 becomes 4.3.5):

4.3.4 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work.

- B.** To insert into Article 46 an additional recommendation as follows (numbered 4.3 with the understanding that the old 4.3 becomes 4.4):

4.3 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work.

Ground: GS 2019 when dealing with the decision on the General Fund (Art. 45) decided this should be done.

The motion was

ADOPTED

Confidential Article 98 – Appeal of T. Bosma re: RSE May 2018 art. 7 – Confidential
Confidential as per GS 2019 Art. 150.

Article 99 – Hamilton Blessings re: RSE Nov. 2018 Art. 8 (amendment to CO Art. 55)

Committee 3 presented draft 2 of a report on an appeal from the Hamilton-Blessings CanRC re: RSE Nov. 2018 Art. 8 (8.6.8.1). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 100 – CNSF (Committee for Needy Students' Fund)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Committee for Needy Students' Fund (CNSF) (8.2.11.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the following CanRC: Willoughby Heights (8.3.6.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 108) decided to reappoint Grassie-Covenant to administer the CNSF for the period of 2015-2017 and to mandate the CNSF to:
 - [4.4.1] Review the current guidelines and procedures in light of [the concerns raised by Winnipeg-Redeemer, Willoughby Heights, and Abbotsford];
 - [4.4.2] Assess the churches annually as per the number of communicant members in the current *Yearbook* based on the anticipated funding required for the year ahead;
 - [4.4.3] Report Annually to each church of the federation on its activities and to report triennially to each General Synod on the same and to conclude their report to synod with appropriate recommendation.
- 2.2 The CNSF reports the following:
 - 2.2.1 Students eligible for assistance apply through the CRTS website;
 - 2.2.2 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;
 - 2.2.3 Thirteen (13) individual students were supported during the reporting time period;
 - 2.2.4 Churches are assessed annually based on projected student enrollment and anticipated fees;
 - 2.2.5 Rates per communicant member have decreased from \$12.00 to \$3.00 during the reporting time period.
- 2.3 The CNSF reviewed the 2013 Support Guidelines and updated the guidelines to better reflect the function of the CNSF 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.
- 2.4 The Willoughby Heights CanRC finds it confusing that the term “committee” is used both for the committee appointed by General Synod (being the Council of the Grassie-Covenant CanRC) and the committee appointed by the Council of Grassie-Covenant to administer the day to day affairs of the fund.
- 2.5 The CNSF made legal inquiries to ensure that the collection and disbursement of funds on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches are in compliance with the Income Tax Act (ITA) and the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA).
- 2.6 Grassie-Covenant is of the opinion that to be in compliance with ITA, Grassie-Covenant *must own the activity of the CNSF*.
- 2.7 To be in compliance with ITA and the CRA, Grassie-Covenant recommends that GS 2019:
 - 2.7.1 Request Grassie (or any other church) to administer the CNSF with a provision that provides Grassie council the autonomy to find an alternate church if council determines not to take on the charitable activity of the CNSF, or
 - 2.7.2 Appoint one or two churches as alternates to Grassie, given the same conditions exists wherein Grassie council determines not to take on the charitable activity of the CNSF.

- 2.8 The Willoughby Heights CanRC is not convinced that an issue exists as a result of the legal counsel received by Grassie-Covenant concerning the compliance matter of ITA and CRA.
- 2.8.1 Willoughby Heights posits that CO Art. 20 states that “the churches ... [shall] extend financial aid to [students of theology] who are in need of it.” As the churches have decided to do this via the route of general synod, CO Art. 75 becomes relevant. When general synod passes property of the churches in common into the hands of an individual church serving as a committee to general synod, it [i.e. general synod] still retains “ownership of the activity.”
- 2.8.2 Willoughby Heights is of the opinion, that “In view of the (legal or fiscal) confusion that is caused by the fact that a *church* is called upon to serve as a committee of general synod, rather than an appointed group of individuals, the general synod of the churches should consider appointing committees in the regular way for matters that involve the flow of funds.”
- 2.8.3 Willoughby Heights suggests that “the churches (through general synod) could centralize the flow of funds and mandate the (incorporated) committee administering the general fund to act in accordance with the directives of authorized committees (which could then still be churches) when it comes to the use of funds. This would be a manner similar to how the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad receives funding.”

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The Committee has completed its mandate and has done its work faithfully.
- 3.2 The amended guidelines have responded to the concerns expressed by churches at Winnipeg-Redeemer, Willoughby Heights, and Abbotsford.
- 3.3 The CNSF would be well served by distinguishing the terminology employed for its overall task and from that of its internal committee.
- 3.4 The CNSF is to be commended for making legal inquiries to ensure that the collection and disbursement of funds on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches are in compliance with the Income Tax Act (ITA) and the CRA.
- 3.5 GS 2019 does not have the legal and accounting competence to judge Grassie-Covenant’s opinion that to be in compliance with ITA and the CRA, in that Grassie-Covenant *must own the activity of the CNSF*.
- 3.6 The CNSF needs to consider if in “*owning the activity of the CNSF*” it remains in compliance with the Church Order Articles 20 and 75.
- 3.7 Willoughby Heights is correct in its position that CO Art. 20 states that “the churches ... [shall] extend financial aid to [students of theology] who are in need of it.” As the churches have decided to do this via the route of general synod, CO Art. 75 becomes relevant. When general synod passes property of the churches in common into the hands of an individual church serving as a committee to general synod, it [i.e. general synod] still retains “ownership of the activity.”
- 3.8 GS 2019 does not agree with Willoughby Heights’ suggestion to make it possible to appoint a group of individuals instead of a church to serve as the CNSF. The CNSF is not just an administrative fund but their mandate specifies dealing sensitively with seminary students and their families.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the Grassie-Covenant CanRC for their work as the Committee for the Needy Students' Fund (CNSF);
- 4.2 To discharge the CNSF for the duties completed during the period January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2017;
- 4.3 To instruct the CNSF to seek advice, and if need be, propose bylaw amendments, to ensure that they remain in compliance with the Income Tax Act and the Canada Revenue Agency;
- 4.4 To reappoint the Grassie-Covenant CanRC as the CNSF to look after extending financial aid to those students of theology who are in need of it;
- 4.5 To mandate the CNSF:
 - 4.5.1 to assess the churches annually as per the number of communicant members in the current *Yearbook* based on the anticipated funding required for the new year ahead;
 - 4.5.2 to report annually to each church of the federation on its activities, and to report triennially to each General Synod on the same and to include appropriate recommendations in this report to Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 101 – RCK (Reformed Churches in Korea)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK) (8.2.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following: the Smithville CanRC (8.3.1.4), the RCK (8.2.2.8), the CRCA (8.2.2.9).

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 106) decided:
 - [4.1] To encourage the CRCA to continue contact with the RCK where possible.
- 2.2 The Rev. S.C. VanDam and br. Jerome Lee (elder in the Surrey-Maranatha CanRC), for whom Korean is his native language, met with representatives of the RCK at the Korean Theological Seminary in Cheonan in September 2017. Rev. VanDam gave a lecture on the early chapters of Jeremiah, after which an edifying interchange occurred.
- 2.3 A CRTS graduate (Sungwoon Yoon) accepted a call to a RCK congregation (Gwangju Reformed Church).
- 2.4 There has been no reconciliation between the RCK and KPCK.
- 2.5 In 2015, one congregation led by Rev. Dong Sup Song was suspended from the federation; it is unclear exactly what the difficulty was.
- 2.6 Since 2008, the number of congregations in the RCK has decreased from eight to two; the reasons for this are unclear.

- 2.7 Smithville notes that while the RCK does not have the resources to continue official contact with the CanRC, the CanRC has been blessed with resources to maintain contact with these churches, even though they may be unable to reciprocate. Smithville encourages Synod “to renew the mandate to the CRCA to continue contact with the RCK where possible”.
- 2.8 Rev. Sungwon Yoon, member of the RCK’s Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, wrote a letter correcting some errors in the CRCA report:
- 2.8.1 Concerning church government, “From the beginning, we followed the revised Dort Church Order and never have followed Episcopalianism in our federation. Due to our small number, we don’t have a General Synod, but we have regular Classis to deal with church matters.”
- 2.8.2 Concerning the lack of reconciliation between the RCK and KPCK, “They [the CRCA] wrote that our federation originated mainly from difficulties with the KPCK, and presumed that we are separated from that church. But that’s not true. When we established our federation, there were five churches and of those five only one minister and few members had a KPCK background. Most of the ministers and members have different backgrounds, not KPCK. So, we are not mainly from the KPCK.”
- 2.8.3 Concerning the number of churches, “They reported our churches decreased from 8 to 2 churches. It’s true that now we have only two churches, but as I mentioned when we established our federation, there were five churches. And we have never been above that number. Also it’s true that one church left our federation. But in other cases, other ministers asked their consistories for release from office and the consistories accepted their requests. After that, members of those churches joined existing RCK churches near them. Also there was one minister who retired because of age, and after that its members also joined the nearest RCK church. So their report can cause confusion about our situations.”
- 2.9 The CRCA replied to the RCK’s committee, apologizing for the errors and indicating that the CanRC have taken note of the corrections.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee has completed its mandate with respect to the RCK.
- 3.2 It is of concern that reconciliation with the KPCK has not been reached.
- 3.3 Although there are only two congregations left in the RCK, we may still be a source of encouragement to them, perhaps when delegates travel to Korea.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

- 4.1 To continue contact with the Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK) where possible;
- 4.2 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 102 – IRCK (Independent Reformed Church in Korea)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK) (8.2.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Smithville (8.3.1.3), Hamilton-Cornerstone (8.3.1.7)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 107) decided:

[4.1] To encourage the CRCA to continue contact with the IRCK where possible.

- 2.2 The Rev. S.C. Van Dam and br. Jerome Lee (elder in the Surrey-Maranatha CanRC), for whom Korean is his native language, visited the IRCK Theological Academy in Anyang (greater Seoul area). At the invitation of the Rev. Heon Soo Kim, he gave a lecture on the theme of father in the early chapters of Jeremiah. This was well received and led to upbuilding conversation and fellowship.
- 2.3 The Rev. Kim indicated that the IRCK is not seeking EF with the CanRC due to a shortage of manpower on their side.
- 2.4 The IRCK is actively involved in publishing reformed materials, including translations of CanRC authors (e.g.: Dr. Van Dam's book *The Elder*).
- 2.5 A student of the CRTS (Daniel Shin) is giving guest lectures at the IRCK Theological Academy.
- 2.6 Smithville notes that while the IRCK does not have the resources to continue official contact with the CanRC, the CanRC has been blessed with resources to maintain contact with these churches, even though they may be unable to reciprocate. Smithville encourages Synod "to renew the mandate to the CRCA to continue contact with the IRCK where possible".
- 2.7 Hamilton-Cornerstone suggests that the CRCA's recommendation "to end official contact" is based on incomplete information:
 - 2.7.1 In recent years several professors of CRTS Hamilton have given guest lectures at the Theological Academy (TA) of the IRCK in Seoul (Drs. Van Dam, De Visser, Van Vliet).
 - 2.7.2 There is a Memorandum of Understanding between CRTS Hamilton and the TA Seoul that is intended to facilitate exchange of students and lecturers. Further, two students (Sungmin Hong, Jaeyong Jung) of the TA Seoul are currently studying at CRTS Hamilton, and with their families, are members of the Hamilton-Cornerstone CanRC.
 - 2.7.3 The Rev. Heon Soo Kim (Principal of the TA Seoul) intends to send more students to CRTS Hamilton in the future.

Hamilton-Cornerstone, therefore, requests Synod to mandate the CRCA "to continue some form of contact with the IRCK."

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee has completed its mandate with respect to the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK).

- 3.2 It is clear that the IRCK values contact with the CanRC, evident from the invitations over the years to CanRC ministers and professors to give lectures at the IRCK Theological Academy, books by CanRC authors have been translated into Korean and published by their publishing house (Sungyak (Holy Covenant) Press), and the presence of Korean students at the CRTS.
- 3.3 For practical reasons, the IRCK is not seeking EF with the CanRC. While it is edifying to have contact with the IRCK, it is not necessary to maintain this on an official level.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

- 4.1 To continue contact with the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK) where possible;
- 4.2 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 103 – KPCK (Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) (8.2.2.1).

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 81) decided:
 - [4.1] To continue EF with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) under the adopted rules;
 - [4.2] To continue to work cooperatively with the GKv and the 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 ICRC 2017.
- 2.2 The Rev. S.C. Van Dam and br. Jerome Lee (elder in the Surrey-Maranatha CanRC), for whom Korean is his native language, visited the GA-KPCK in September 2017, at which the Rev. Van Dam brought greetings on behalf of the CanRC.
- 2.3 From documents obtained for GA-KPCK 2017 (translated by br. Lee), the CRCA ascertained that the KPCK desires to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ.
- 2.4 At GA-KPCK 2017, a meeting held between our delegates, the KPCK foreign relations committee, and delegates from GKSA and GKv, the matter of the GKv decision to open the offices to women as well as recent developments in the KPCK were discussed. An extensive meeting was held the next day between our delegates, the KPCK foreign relations committee, the GKv delegate, and representatives from the KPCK in North America. The main topic of discussion was how to respond to the GKv decision to open the offices to women. Our serious objections were indicated, echoed by the other delegates, and were well received by the KPCK foreign relations committee members.

The Rev. Van Dam gave an interview with the KPCK newspaper, and invitations were exchanged.

2.5 Some interaction between CanRC and the KPCK delegates was held at the ICRC 2017.

3. Considerations

3.1 The committee has completed its mandate with respect to the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK).

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

3.3 With increased globalization, it is good to maintain EF with the KPCK to support each other as South Korea is rapidly becoming secularized.

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

3.5 It is desirable to monitor how the KPCK responds to the GKv decision to open the offices to women, in line with the expectation that the churches in EF shall inform each other of their broadest assemblies.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

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

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

4.2.1 To continue to work cooperatively with sister churches who have relations with the KPCK in exercising our relationship with KPCK in meaningful ways, and to take turns visiting the KPCK's annual General Assembly;

4.2.2 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;

4.2.3 To maintain regular communication with KPCK as well as meet with their delegates at the ICRC 2021;

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

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

ADOPTED

Article 104 - GKv - Letter to the individual congregations and to synod

The following text was adopted for a letter to be sent to all the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) and brought in person to their synod 2021. The second clerk was instructed to ensure a Dutch translation is made of both the letter and the decision found in GS 2019 Art. 41.

To all the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (GKv)

Re: Decision on Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Sister-Church Relationship)

May 21, AD 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is with profound sadness and heavy hearts that as Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches held in Edmonton 2019 we write directly to you—each congregation in the federation of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated). We are taking this unusual step because of the distressing situation that has developed within your churches over the last years leading to the most recent decision of your General Synod Meppel 2017 to allow women to serve in any of the special offices. Not only has this development brought about a disruption of our long-standing and deeply cherished sister-church relationship, but, most importantly, it is offensive and disobedient to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The purpose of our letter is to explain our decision as Synod regarding your federation of churches, to offer a final word of exhortation, and to encourage the faithful among you to take necessary action.

As you may be aware, for more than twelve years we as churches have expressed growing disquiet with decisions made by your synods which have increasingly put our relationship as sister-churches under strain. Our General Synods 2007 and 2010, through an appointed committee, communicated to your synods of that time period serious concerns about the faithfulness of your federation to the Word of God in particular matters. To our dismay, those concerns were not alleviated but instead grew worse. Our General Synod 2013 took matters a step further by writing a letter of admonition directly to your General Synod 2014, clearly warning against the underlying faulty method of interpreting Scripture (i.e. hermeneutics) which was evident among you. Our Synod pointed out how those hermeneutics resulted in your Synod failing to maintain faithfulness to the Word of God in several matters. Once again, there was no change in the direction of your churches. Our General Synod 2016 then decided to suspend certain formal rules of fellowship with your federation in the hope that this more drastic measure would arouse your next synod to reverse course. Our Synod 2016 also appointed a committee to send a letter directly to each congregation in your federation to, as much as possible, make all consistories aware of the great seriousness of the issues and to warn against the very real threat that our ecclesiastical fellowship would be severed if there was no genuine repentance evidenced in the decisions of your next synod. With great sorrow, our General Synod 2019 received a thorough report from the appointed committee showing that not only was the warning of Synod 2016 not heeded, but Synod Meppel 2017 carried forward the hermeneutical trajectory of your previous synods and decided that the Bible permits women to serve in the offices of deacon, elder, and minister. In the address by the fraternal delegates sent to our Synod 2019 by Synod Meppel 2017, nothing was said that contradicted the findings of this report. For reasons outlined in the report and presented in our Synod Edmonton 2019 decision (see attached), this action is a clear violation of the Word of God and has forced us to terminate our ecclesiastical fellowship with you, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated).

Brothers and sisters, we do not write any of the above with a sense of superiority or self-righteousness but rather in humility and awareness of our own sins and shortcomings. We too are susceptible to error and we pray that the Lord will open our eyes should we become delinquent in doctrine or in conduct. Daily we also need to repent as the Holy Spirit pricks our conscience. Our fervent desire is that by means of this letter, by means of the many admonitions expressed to you by us and many of your sister churches, that you as a federation of churches will also be pricked

in your conscience and return to a faithful walk with the Lord in obedience to the plain teaching of His word. Please know that as General Synod Edmonton we have prayed for this very thing and rest assured that this will be the ongoing prayer of our churches for you as well. May this Word of God stimulate us all in these matters: “Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way” (Ps. 25:8–9).

We also are aware that many individuals and more than a few consistories have all along shared our concerns and have been praying and working for a return to faithfulness to God’s Word at the synod level. We want to encourage all such individuals, consistories, and congregations that you do not stand alone and that we wish to support you as best we can in this troublesome time. By means of this letter we would like to urge all members and consistories to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) by calling your next synod to repent and return to the Scriptures, to the Reformed confession we have historically shared together. If in time that process does not produce the desired result, we would then urge you to consider your place in the federation. As we confess in the Belgic Confession, when a church federation no longer consistently maintains the marks of the true church, it is time to come out of it and seek membership in a true church: “. . . it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those who do not belong to the church and to join this assembly wherever God has established it” (BC Art. 28). We recognize that this process will not be easy and undoubtedly will be filled with many challenges but we believe it is necessary for the glory of the Lord, the preservation of his church, and the salvation of many souls. As a church federation we will support all such efforts with prayer, encouragement, and whatever other assistance we may be able to render. We encourage you to take up contact with our Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad in order to seek whatever help you may need (crca@canrc.org).

Dear brothers and sisters, please receive our letter in the spirit in which it was written, the spirit of brotherly love and concern. May the Lord give you grace, wisdom, and strength as you reflect on these things and find your way forward.

Yours in Christ Jesus our Lord,

On behalf of General Synod Edmonton 2019,

Rev. Douwe Agema
(Chairman)

Rev. Peter H. Holtvliwer
(Second Clerk)

Article 105 – NAPARC (North American Presbyterian And Reformed Council)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) — North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) (8.2.3.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 89) gave the following mandate to the CCCNA concerning 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;
- [4.3.3¹] 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;
- [4.3.4] To assist the local churches when asked about conflicts with the “Golden Rule’ Comity Agreement” and the “Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations”
- [4.3.5] To address NAPARC about the lack of definition for the terms “Member Church” and “Unit Vote” in the revised Constitution of NAPARC.
- 2.2 [Re 4.3.1] The CCCNA participated in the annual meetings held each November in 2016, 2017, and will do so again, D.V. in November 2018. Four delegates were sent to each meeting. 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.
- 2.3 [Re 4.3.2] The CCCNA secretary conveyed the decision of GS 2016 (approve the revised Constitution and Bylaws) to the NAPARC secretary in a letter dated July 6th, 2016.
- 2.4 [Re 4.3.3] The CCCNA indicated its plan to raise in the plenary sessions of the November 2018 of NAPARC, concerns about the application of the “Golden Rule’ Comity Agreement” and the “Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations” as per the mandate above. No explanation is offered why this could not already be raised at NAPARC 2016 or 2017.
- 2.5 [Re 4.3.4] The CCCNA received one letter seeking advice on the “Golden Rule” Comity Agreement, to which a response was sent. In addition, the CCCNA 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. No detailed response was received from Guelph-Emmanuel.
- 2.6 [Re 4.3.5] The CCCNA is of the opinion that understandable and reasonable terminology is used in the constitution and bylaws.
- 2.7 The CCCNA continues to see the benefit of being involved in NAPARC, both to derive insights and to contribute to the Reformed witness of it. 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 triennially.
- 2.8 The CCCNA also brings to the attention of Synod that for them to adequately fulfill their mandate, for example recommendations 4.2.3 and 4.2.5, it would be most helpful if GS 2016 had provided more information to the committee in order to address the concern(s) raised.

¹ The numbering in the original Acts has been corrected.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CCCNA has completed its mandate concerning NAPARC.
- 3.2 It would indeed be more helpful if more information would be provided to the CCCNA in order to deal with any concern(s) that exist.
- 3.3 It is regrettable that the CCCNA did not bring up the requested concerns at the 2016 or 2017 meetings of NAPARC.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To discharge the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) from the mandate given it by GS 2016;
- 4.2 To mandate the CCCNA to continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC and to continue its active involvement in it;
- 4.3 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 106 – Closing Devotions

A few housekeeping matters were addressed.

The Rev. VanSpronsen led in evening devotions. He had those present sing Psalm 110:3,4, read Hebrews 7:22-8:2 and spoke some words of meditation in connection with Ascension Day next week. He had those present sing Hymn 42:4,5,6 and led in prayer remembering, among others, those burdened by difficulties in the churches, the Korean churches, the Dutch churches, and NAPARC.

Synod was adjourned until 9:00am the next day.

Day 7 — Morning Session
Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Article 106 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman welcomed students from the Parkland Immanuel Christian School. He read Psalm 119:41-48 and spoke some words. Prior to prayer, the chairman expressed condolences to Elder Schouten, whose mother had passed away earlier in the night. He then led in prayer, following which those present sang Psalm 119:16,17,18. He called the roll and noted all synod members were present.

Article 107 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 108 – FRCSA (Free Reformed Churches in South Africa)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) (8.2.2.1).

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 81) decided:
 - [4.1] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA);
 - [4.2] To mandate the 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.
- 2.2 In August 2018, br. O. Bouwman, member of the CRCA, along with Dr. A.J. deVisser attended the FRCSA synod Soshanguve North (near Pretoria) as fraternal delegates. A report of that visit was shared in *Clarion*, and correspondence was received from the FRCSA mission deputies asking us to consider funding some of their mission work in light of their anticipated budget shortfalls.
- 2.3 The CanRC has had EF with the FRCSA since 1954, with numerous close ties – ecclesiastical, operational, and personal – between the FRCSA and CanRC.
- 2.4 Over the past three years the CRTS has been supporting the FRCSA in the training of their theological students through videos of class instruction. A recent CRTS graduate, the Rev. J. Bruintjes, accepted a call from the church in Cape Town and began his ministry there in 2017. The South African delegate to synod advised us that a number of students from the FRCSA are preparing for studies for the ministry at CRTS.
- 2.5 The CanRC have financially supported the burgeoning Reformational Study Centre near Pretoria, and in connection with this, the Rev. R.J. Kampen is fulfilling a “special ministerial task” under the oversight of the Dunnville CanRC for this project.
- 2.6 Although the FRCSA did not require financial assistance at GS 2016, the topic of financial need has come up again. The financial needs of the FRCSA are and can be expected to continue to be substantial and merit attention.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee has completed its mandate with respect to the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA).
- 3.2 With thankfulness to the Lord, the FRCSA shows in confession and practice to be a church federation seeking to serve the Lord according to His Word.
- 3.3 There is good reason to continue EF with the FRCSA.
- 3.4 Given the brotherhood of the communion of saints around the globe, the current circumstances of the FRCSA make it desirable for the CanRC to be willing to assist to the degree we can. Churches possessing the means and desire to assist the FRCSA need to know that there are Canada Revenue Agency regulations regarding the need for charitable organizations which send money overseas to retain “direction and control” over how these funds are disbursed.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) under the adopted rules;
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.2.1 To send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;
 - 4.2.2 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;
 - 4.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 109 – GGRI (Reformed Churches in Indonesia)

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on the GGRI. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 110 – GGRC (Reformed Calvinist Churches [in Indonesia])

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on the GGRC. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 111 – PCA (Presbyterian Church in America)

1. Material

- 1.1 Letter from the Flamborough-Redemption CanRC (8.3.2.9)

2. Observations

- 2.1 Flamborough-Redemption requests Synod to establish contact and engage in dialogue with the Presbyterian Churches in America (PCA):

- 2.1.1 The CanRC currently have no official contact or dialogue with the PCA.
- 2.1.2 The CanRC is a member of NAPARC together with the PCA.
- 2.1.3 The CCCNA report is silent on a direct relationship with the PCA.
- 2.1.4 The PCA has 24 churches in Canada: 5 in British Columbia, 5 in Alberta, 8 in Ontario, 3 in New Brunswick, and 3 in Nova Scotia. Seventeen of the 24 PCA churches in mainland BC, Alberta, and Ontario, are in close proximity to CanRC churches.

- 2.2 The CanRC have not received a formal invitation from the PCA for establishing contact.
- 2.3 From public literature it is known that the PCA is a theologically diverse church.

3. Consideration

A similar request was made by the Hamilton-Cornerstone CanRC to GS 2013 (Art. 81), and Synod's Consideration stated:

While Hamilton-Cornerstone's suggestion may have merit, it would be appropriate and also helpful for Hamilton (or some other congregation so inclined) to first investigate the PCA further. If after investigation and evaluation of the PCA there is an apparent potential for fruitful ecclesiastical contact, the issue should be brought from the minor assemblies to the broader, where it may be placed on the agenda of the CCCNA for its attention. This course of action would be similar to that taken, e.g., by the church of Aldergrove with respect to the Free Reformed Churches of North America (see *Acts of Synod Fergus* 1998, Article 98, Consideration III.A).

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide that the above consideration serves as answer to the Flamborough-Redemption CanRC.

ADOPTED

Article 112 – HRC (Heritage Reformed Congregations)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) regarding the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) (8.2.3.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.2.3), Toronto-Bethel (8.3.2.5), Attercliffe (8.3.2.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 49) decided concerning the CCCNA:
 - [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 next general synod.

- 2.2. The CanRC do not have EF with the HRC, but both are members of NAPARC.
- 2.3 In 2016, two committee members attended the General Synod of the HRC and brought greetings on behalf of the churches. The committee met with the HRC Church Correspondence Committee in November 2016.
- 2.4 In 2017, the committee received a notice from the HRC Church Correspondence Committee that their General Synod had instructed them to “contact the Canadian Reformed Churches to discuss the possibility of entering into official ecclesiastical fellowship” with the CanRC at their Level One Correspondence (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.*
- 2.5 A meeting was held in November, 2017, in which their Synod’s instruction was discussed, and how we can at this stage cooperate in promoting the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ. Further discussion was planned at the NAPARC meeting in November, 2018.
- 2.6 In 2018, a committee member attended the General Synod of the HRC and brought greetings on behalf of the CanRC.
- 2.7 The committee recommends that the CanRC accept the HRC’s invitation to enter Level One relationship with them.
- 2.8 Lincoln-Vineyard is “fully supportive” of entering into a Level One relationship with the HRC.
- 2.9 The Councils of Toronto-Bethel and the Aurora Heritage Reformed Churches had a “positive and fruitful” meeting in January 2019 to become more familiar with each other, and agreed to a follow-up meeting.
- 2.10 Attercliffe agrees with the committee’s recommendation to enter a Level One relationship with the HRC.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee has been diligent in completing its mandate.
- 3.2 Engaging in contact and dialogue with the Heritage Reformed Church (HRC) is equivalent to HRC’s Level One correspondence.
- 3.3 On the basis of the CCCNA report and the input from the churches it would seem right to accept the offer of a Level One relationship of the HRC.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To accept the invitation of the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) to enter into their Level One correspondence;
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):
 - 4.2.1 To explore further what we have in common with the HRC and to assess if and when a decision can be made regarding Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with this church;
 - 4.2.2 To keep the churches with which EF has already been established informed of our relationship with the HRC and consult with them concerning the HRC;
 - 4.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 113 – Guidelines

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a report on the Synod Guidelines report (8.2.1.1). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 114 - GGRI-T (Reformed Churches in Indonesia - Timor) – Letter

During the course of Synod a letter was received from the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T). The GGRI-T are the fruit of Smithville’s mission work in Timor. The GGRI-T expressed regret that they had been unable to send a delegation to GS 2019. The chairman ruled that the letter was to be distributed to all Synod members and that the executive would come with a proposal as to how to deal with the letter. (*See further article 118.*)

Synod was adjourned until 2:00pm for committee work.

Day 7 — Afternoon Session
Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Article 115 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Psalm 135:1,2. He noted all synod members were present. A housekeeping matter was dealt with. Students from the Parkland Immanuel Christian School were welcomed.

Article 116 – Overtures RSW 2018 re: *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal*

Committee 1 presented draft 1 of a report on overtures from RSW 2018 regarding the *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* (8.4.1 & 8.4.2). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 117 – FRCA (Free Reformed Churches of Australia)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) (8.2.2.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 21) decided:

- [4.1] To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) 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 on 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 committee 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 committees 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.

- 2.2 Synod Bunbury 2018

- 2.2.1 Br. H. Schouten and Rev. A. Witten attended Synod Bunbury as fraternal delegates in June 2018.
- 2.2.2 Synod Bunbury decided to continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
- 2.2.3 Synod Bunbury decided that it is not feasible to establish a Free Reformed Theological Seminary at this time and mandated the Deputies:

- To investigate the possibility of pursuing distance education with the CRTS;
- To participate in the ad hoc committee investigating the possibility of distance education;
- To report to the next synod with a strategic long-term plan for a future Australian theological seminary that will have the potential to serve our sister churches and other churches in the wider Reformed community in the Asia-Pacific region (e.g. the Philippines, New Zealand, Indonesia, Singapore, South Africa).

Regardless of what future decisions may be taken, strong support for and appreciation of the CRTS remains.

- 2.2.4 Synod Bunbury decided to adopt and produce an Australian version of the Canadian *Book of Praise* that will be called the “*Australian Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter*.”
- 2.2.5 Synod Bunbury decided to terminate the sister relationship with the GKv. The following grounds were given to support this decision:
Ground 1 for the FRCAs decision to terminate relations with the GKv is inaccurate by virtue of being incomplete. Grounds 2 & 3 are reported accurately via direct quotes from Synod, but Ground 1 currently reads:
- [1.] “The relationship with the GKv has become untenable due to their use of the ‘New Hermeneutics’ – principles allowing the current cultural context to play a determining role in explaining scripture. This has allowed the GKv to turn away from the clear instruction in God’s Word.”
 - [2.] The evidence of ground one above is given particular expression in the recent decision of the GKv (Synod Meppel 2017) to allow women to the office of deacon, elder and minister.
 - [3.] There has been no adequate response, let alone repentance, to earlier admonitions:
 - [i.] Letter of admonition from Synod Armadale 2012 to GKv Synod Ede dated 22 April 2013 (Acts of Synod 2012, Appendix 5);
 - [ii.] Letter from Synod Baldivis 2015 to GKv Synod Meppel 2017 (Acts of Synod 2015, Appendix 2).
- 2.2.6 Synod Bunbury 2018 decided to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK and the GKN and encourage these two federations to work towards unity with one another.
- 2.2.7 FRCA Synod Armadale 2012 decided that “the [DGK’s] relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford (LRCA) may be an impediment to a future sister church relationship with the [DGK].”
- 2.2.8 Synod Bunbury 2018 gave deputies the task to encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor.
- 2.2.9 Synod Bunbury 2018 decided:
- To continue the sister church relationship with the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC), Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI), the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ), the Kosin

Presbyterian church of Korea (KPCK), and the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA) (see also 2.2.2 above);

- To investigate two churches in Australia, the Southern Presbyterian Church and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church;
- To continue to liaise with the URCNA and to recommend to Synod 2021 whether to proceed in a sister church relationship;
- To establish contact with the OPC.

3 Considerations

- 3.1 From communications with the FRCA both in official contact and private conversations, attendance of local worship services, and observations at Synod Bunbury, it is clear that this sister church remains a faithful church. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to adopted confessions and church order.
- 3.2 The value of our relationship with the FRCA is evident particularly in the ongoing cooperation in theological education and mission work.
- 3.3 The CanRC can assist the FRCA in the production of an *Australian Book of Praise* and exploring possibilities for distance education from CRTS.

4 Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) 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 encourage the Board of Governors and Senate of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) to continue contact with the deputyship for theological education in the FRCA in matters pertaining to their desire to have the first year CRTS program available as distance education in the short term and their desire to establish a regional seminary in Australia in the medium to long term;
- 4.4 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.4.1 To maintain close contact with the deputyship of the FRCA in matters of relations with sister churches abroad and to consult the FRCA concerning changes or developments in third party relationships;
 - 4.4.2 To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*, Committee on Bible Translations) in areas of mutual interest where the CRCA's mandate does not reach;
 - 4.4.3 To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2021;
 - 4.4.4 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 118 - GGRI-T (Reformed Churches in Indonesia) – Letter

Recommendation of the chair:

To have the chairman read only the greetings in the letter received from the Reformed Churches in Indonesia-Timor (GGRI-T).

To pass the whole letter on to both the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and to the Smithville CanRC (as sending church for mission work in Timor) for them to take note of and deal with as they deem appropriate.

ADOPTED

The chairman then read the opening lines and closing lines of the letter. (*See also Article 114.*)

Synod was adjourned until 7:00pm for committee work.

Day 7 — Evening Session
Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Article 119 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Psalm 66:1,4. He noted all synod members were present.

Article 120 – GGRC (Reformed Calvinist Churches [in Indonesia])

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Reformed Calvinist Churches [in Indonesia] (GGRC) (8.2.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Smithville (8.3.1.5) Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.1.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 116) decided:

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

[4.2] To mandate the CRCA:

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

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

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

- 2.2 From the CRCA report, we note the following observations:

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

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

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

- 2.3 Smithville writes that it does not intend to discourage a relationship with the GGRC, but urges Synod “to ensure that due diligence takes place before the next step is taken, and that all hesitation noted at Synod Dunnville is responded to sufficiently.” Smithville notes the following:
- 2.3.1 The nine churches resulting from its mission work have decided not to affiliate with the GGRC although Smithville initially encouraged this.
 - 2.3.2 The CRCA has found no evidence concerning the accusation that “the GGRC has a tendency to hierarchy and ‘strong men,’” They should therefore interact with the GGRI-Timor to understand these concerns.
 - 2.3.3 The CRCA comments that “Seminary training is an internal matter not regulated by Rules for EF; it belongs to the minor points of church order and practice for which churches abroad shall not be rejected.” We must understand that while the typical North American theological student has enjoyed an upbringing in a Reformed home, has received six or more years of catechetical instruction, and has attended a college or university (and so has reached the age of 21 or 22), the typical theological student of the GGRC (and GGRI and GGRI-T) is commonly at best a high school graduate (and approximately 18 years of age). In that context, giving space to students to attend non-Reformed institutions is scarcely “a minor point.”
- 2.4 Lincoln-Vineyard objects to the recommendation of the CRCA to extend EF to the GGRC.
- 2.4.1 “The report from the CRCA does not present evidence that the concerns regarding the GGRC and their adherence to the Church Order, presented to GS 2016 and leading to the decision not to accept the offer of the Reformed Calvinist churches in Indonesia (GGRC) to enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, have been addressed. Rather, a continued relationship of assistance and guidance is appropriate until these issues have been notably resolved.”
 - 2.4.2 Like Smithville, Lincoln-Vineyard is of the opinion that the issue of some men of the GGRC receiving ministerial training at a non-Reformed institution is questionable, having “a bearing on the Reformed character of the preaching and teaching ministry and of the federative life of the GGRC.”
 - 2.4.3 Lincoln-Vineyard mentions that “it has consistently been the stated position of Smithville since the inception of our mission project that the work would occur in cooperation with the GGRC and that any established churches would seek unity with the GGRC. Further, it was not our intention to establish a new federation in Indonesia. We acknowledge that our stated purpose and the outcome are very different.” This “was in no way a deliberate rejection of our stated intention but was rather the consequence of the inability of the Canadian Reformed Churches over several Synods to recognize the GGRC as faithful churches of the Lord and to establish sister relations between the federations, an eventuality we did not foresee at the inception of our mission work.”
 - 2.4.4 Lincoln-Vineyard goes on to state that “Granting EF to the GGRC would cause them to feel as if they are now on the same ‘level’ as the CanRC churches and that there is no longer room for growth or brotherly admonition from the CanRC. This, in turn, puts the GGRI-T in danger of following with the practices of the GGRC,

i.e. slack on following the church order, because the GGRC are seen as ‘legitimate’ by the CanRC churches.”

- 2.5 An extract from concerns listed by GS 2016 in regard to the GGRC can be found in Article 116:

[2.2.2] “Neither GGRI-NTT nor the GGRC have shown much interest in cooperating with STAKRI which is supported by the Smithville CanRC.”

[2.2.3] “Over time, however, the Canadian Reformed Churches got to know the GGRC quite well, but in the meantime several difficulties and divisions within the GGRC made the Canadian Reformed Churches reluctant to enter into such a relationship. This situation continues and over the past three years the CRCA has not seen much positive change in this situation.”

[2.2.4] “Ministers are being ordained within the GGRC who did not come from STAKRI but from other seminaries in Indonesia. The way in which they were called and ordained is not in agreement with the intention of the Church Order. The GGRC do not send their students for the ministry to STAKRI, as they had committed to during their synod in 2011 and 2012. Also the unity with the GGRI-NTT is something that seems to disappear into the background more and more.”

3. Considerations

- 3.1 With thankfulness to the Lord, the CRCA concluded that the GGRC evidence in confession and practice to be churches seeking to serve the Lord according to His Word.
- 3.2 As to the accusation of “hierarchy and ‘strong men,’” and in particular the perception that the GGRC are dominated by one person, the CRCA reported to Synod, “As far as the CRCA could observe – in discussions, during ecclesiastical assemblies, and during less formal occasions – the GGRC practice mutual accountability between churches and between office bearers.”
- 3.3 As to seminary training, according to information provided by Rev. Yonson Dethan, seven ministers in the GGRC were trained at the Reformed Seminary of the GGRI-NTT in Sumba. One has since gone to be with the Lord. The GGRC has sent four students to STAKRI but been disappointed in not seeing them graduate with degrees from that institution. Two completed three years of instruction at STAKRI, while two others completed the entire program. Two are currently serving as ministers and two are serving as evangelists in the GGRC.
Another minister student graduated from a Reformed Seminary on the island of Bali, and one graduated from SALEM, an interdenominational seminary.
- 3.4 As to a perceived unwillingness on the part of the GGRC or the GGRI-NTT to send students to STAKRI, aside from the practical issue noted above, there is also another matter to consider. In our relations with other churches around the globe, the CanRC do not tell other churches where they ought to send their future ministers for training. We also would not appreciate other churches directing us where to send our students. It is inconsistent for the CanRC to deal differently with the churches of Indonesia. From our distance in Canada, we are geographically and culturally too far removed to be able to weigh responsibly the “issues” any given church may have concerning the theological training of their ministers. It is in step with the Lord’s instruction in

Matthew 18 that if a church has any issues with an organization such as STAKRI, it needs to make work of sorting that out on the local level.

- 3.5 It is clear from Lincoln-Vineyard’s letter, that the fact that the CanRC have not recognized the GGRC as faithful churches of the Lord has contributed to the mission churches in Timor forming their own federation with a view to joining the national GGRI. Meanwhile, they now form a third group of churches next to the GGRI and the GGRC.
- 3.6 Using the statement that “there is a strong hierarchical structure in Indonesia” would raise the question whether it is possible to enter into EF with any churches there. Even if it can be proven that this aspect of Indonesian culture has an impact on church life, one only has to look back in the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in past centuries to see parallels, caused by a lack of sufficient education on the part of many church members who were obliged to look to their educated leaders for guidance. The GGRC have sought to remedy the lack of education by establishing Reformed schools.
- 3.7 The GGRC do not consider themselves to be strong in every respect, which is why for eighteen years they have been asking the CanRC to help them.
- 3.8 The fear expressed by Lincoln-Vineyard that “granting EF to the GGRC would cause them to feel as if they are now on the same ‘level’ as the CanRC churches and that there is no longer room for growth or brotherly admonition from the CanRC” is a supposed future that is not in line with how the GGRC have presented themselves during the years of their contact with the CanRC and it conflicts with observations noted by the CRCA in its current report and in years past.
- 3.9 As CanRC we have been looking to the FRCA for direction in regard to how to deal with the GGRC. As indicated in the CRCA report to GS 2019, a complicating factor is that the FRCA’s approach has been shaped by the view that they can only be sister churches with one church in one country. Since the FRCA already is a sister church of the GGRI, the focus of the FRCA’s contact with the GGRC has been to encourage them to pursue federative unity with the GGRI.
- 3.10 Meanwhile we should also keep in mind that our sister church in Indonesia, the GGRI-NTT, has had a sister relationship with the GGRC since 1991. In the interest of promoting unity among the Reformed Churches in Indonesia and offering further help to the various parties, it makes sense to equalize the “playing field” by offering EF to the GGRC just as the GGRI-NTT did almost three decades ago, rather than indirectly calling that sister relationship into question by continuing to delay establishing EF with the GGRC.
- 3.11 After eighteen years of contact between the GGRC and the CanRC in formal and informal ways, continuing to show reluctance to enter into EF with the GGRC on the basis of vague statements concerning their character has become very questionable and also threatens to perpetuate the divisions between the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor, founded by the mission work of the Smithville CanRC.
- 3.12 Entering into EF with the GGRC acknowledges the history and legitimacy of this federation of churches. A sister church relationship between the GGRC and CanRC will provide a heightened mode of interaction that allows for addressing each other with respect to matters that pertain to doctrine, worship, and governance, also where church unity with other Reformed Churches is concerned.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Calvinist Churches [in Indonesia] (GGRC);
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.2.1 To send a delegation to the next synod of the GGRC, planned for 2019, informing them of this decision;
 - 4.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) as they encourage and support the churches of the GGRC in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;
 - 4.2.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in Timor;
 - 4.2.4 To encourage the GGRC to foster and promote church unity among Reformed churches in Indonesia;
 - 4.2.5 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 121 – GGRI (Reformed Churches in Indonesia)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI) (8.2.2.1)
- 1.2 Letter of greetings from the GGRI (8.2.2.11)

2. Observations

2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 115) decided:

- [4.1] To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT) under the adopted rules;
- [4.2] To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - [4.2.1] To discuss our rules for EF 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 2019 regarding a relationship of EF with the GGRI;
 - [4.2.2] 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;
 - [4.2.3] To try to ensure that a delegation of two brothers is sent to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at a synod of the GGRI;

- [4.2.4] To work in consultation and cooperation with the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) to encourage and support the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in the Reformed doctrine and church polity;
 - [4.2.5] To encourage the GGRI to seek cooperation with the Reformed Theological School in Kupang (established by Smithville);
 - [4.2.6] To encourage the GGRI to seek closer contact and cooperation with the Calvinist Reformed Churches (GGRC) and to monitor the progress of the dialogue between the GGRI and the GGRC.
- [4.3] To pass on the letter of the Toronto-Bethel CanRC to the CRCA for consideration.
- 2.2 From the CRCA report, we note the following observations:
- 2.2.1 There are many historic and personal ties between the GGRI and the CanRC. Further, like the CanRC, the GGRI are concerned about developments in the GKv. This implies that the CanRC ought not to discontinue its relationship of EF with the GGRI. Nevertheless, the geographical and cultural distance between Canada and Indonesia makes this a cumbersome relationship to maintain for the CanRC. It is prudent and proper for the CanRC to maintain this relationship in close consultation with the FRCA, who are much better positioned to provide whatever assistance the GGRI require.
 - 2.2.2 The CRCA has found no evidence substantiating the allegation that the GGRI-KalBar is compromising its commitment to the Reformed faith; rather, the CRCA witnessed the GGRI- KalBar testify that it would not do so.
 - 2.2.3 The CRCA has found no evidence that the GGRI-Papua is unreformed in its practice of church polity. The approach taken by the GGRI-Papua to structure its communication with the government is Biblical and appropriate in the civil context of the GGRI-Papua.
 - 2.2.4 The GGRI, pointing to the harmony and unity at its national synod, requests the CanRC to receive the GGRI as a whole as sister churches (NS-GGRI-2016 decision 9.1). Further, the GGRI as a whole has been received by the ICRC as member, and the FRCA and GKv have extended their relationship of EF to cover the whole GGRI.
 - 2.2.5 The FRCA extended EF to the GGRI as a national federation in 2012. Subsequent to this, because of a request for more information, both in 2015 and 2018, the General Synods mandated the deputies to “as yet report to the churches with a clearer picture of the GGRI Papua and the GGRI Kalimantan Barat that have united and formed one federation with the GGRI-NTT in February 2012, confirming their Reformed character and the implications of this union.”
 - 2.2.6 Nevertheless, GS 2018 stated in Article 105, Grounds “1. The GGRI shows faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed confessions. 2. Our rules for sister church relations indicate that the churches need to mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy. The deputies express confidence about the Reformed faithfulness of the federation. At the same time, they do indicate that there are concerns, and it is important that we monitor these things.”

- 2.3 In the letter of greetings from the GGRI to the CanRC, mention is made of the first National Synod of the GGRI held in February 2012, in Papua. There the Reformed Churches of Papua, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) and West Kalimantan become one federation. A National Synod is to be held every four years. A second National Synod was held in 2016. In that Second National Synod, they decided to request the CanRC to accept the whole federation, not only the churches in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). This request is repeated in their letter of greetings to GS 2019.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 With thankfulness to the Lord, the CRCA concluded that the GGRI evidence in confession and practice to be churches seeking to serve the Lord according to his Word.
- 3.2 Since the GGRI in the provinces of NTT, KalBar, and Papua now see themselves as a single federation, we also have to see them as such. There is no reason brought forward to discontinue our EF with the GGRI-NTT, and not to extend EF to the GGRI as a whole.
- 3.3 The FRCA knows the GGRI-NTT well from frequent interactions with them on the field, and so has mandated deputies to “support the GGRI with the intention of building up the Reformed character of these churches.”
- 3.4 The FRCA also wants to get to know the GGRI KalBar and Papua better in order to assist them properly according to the terms of EF. Observations 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 above may help address their concerns.
- 3.5 Given that the FRCA is closer to Indonesia than the CanRC, it is responsible that our CRCA work in close conjunction with the FRCA allowing the Australians to take primary responsibility for the direction of the contacts in Indonesia. It would therefore be helpful if the respective committees would share information on their observations and activities in Indonesia.
- 3.6 The GGRI, as a federation of federations, could prove to be an effective vehicle to foster church unity among the various groups of Reformed churches in Indonesia.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To extend ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) to the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI) as a whole, being the federations of the churches in Kalimantan Barat (GGRI-KalBar), the churches in Nusa Tenggara Timur (GGRI-NTT), and the churches in Papua (GGRI-Papua);
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
- 4.2.1 To try to send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next national synod of the GGRI, planned for 2020;
- 4.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;
- 4.2.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in Timor;
- 4.2.4 To encourage the GGRI to foster and promote church unity among Reformed churches in Indonesia;

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

ADOPTED

Article 122 – Guidelines

1. Material

- 1.1 Synod Guidelines Report by the executive committee of GS 2016 (8.2.1.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The report indicates that the authors analyzed the submission of the Dunnville CanRC, convening church of GS 2016, which made a number of suggestions on how to improve the Guidelines.
- 2.2 The report concludes that two changes to the GS Guidelines are advisable as follows:
- 2.2.1 **Re: submitting hard copies to general synod.** The current guideline reads “All material for Synod should be received by the convening Church (in digital format and five paper copies) not later than six weeks prior to the convocation of General Synod.” The report takes up the suggestion of Dunnville that five paper copies are not necessary and so suggests dropping that requirement completely. The report indicates that the one paper copy needed for the archives of general synod can be printed out by the convening church.
- 2.2.2 **Re: submitting digital copies to general synod.**
- 2.2.2.1 Since submissions came to GS 2016 in a variety of digital formats creating unnecessary extra work for the convening church, Dunnville suggested that a guideline be added indicating that “All scanned submissions should be in .pdf, .doc, or .docx file format.” The executive committee consulted a brother whose profession is in “IT security.” He suggested that submissions to synod be limited to PDF and that these should not be in picture PDF (which are not searchable) but in text PDF (which are searchable).
- 2.2.2.2 Concerning authenticating submissions, Dunnville suggested the addition of the following guideline: “Proper electronic signatures will be accepted as a suitable means of verifying the authenticity of a submission.” The brother consulted considered that this would not be practicable as most submitters will not have the necessary software. He also suggested it would not be necessary in our church community as “there are other ways to verify whether a letter is authentic or fraudulent.” The executive committee recommends “that the convening church ensure all agenda items for a synod are in text PDF format. We further recommend that the convening church and synod decide for themselves how to verify the authenticity of a submission.”
- 2.2.3 **Re: Separate Submissions for Separate Topics.** Dunnville suggested and the executive committee agreed that “If at all possible and feasible submitters should stick to one topic in each of their submissions.” However, this is not that simple in practice since a church may at times deal with a Committee Report (e.g., CCCNA)

which itself covers more than one topic. They conclude that while the convening church can make this request of those who submit items, “the convening church will still need to check the contents of a letter to see whether it covers more than one topic.”

2.2.4 Re: General. The executive committee believes that “the suggestions from Dunnville actually only require one minor change to the Guidelines [see above 2.2.1]. For the rest, Dunnville’s concerns can be decided upon by the convening church itself. Thus the report recommends adding the following 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.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The authors of the report are to be commended for carefully analyzing and interacting with the submission of Dunnville, even conducting further research, and providing useful recommendations to GS 2019.
- 3.2 There seems to be no reason to require submitters to produce five written copies alongside of the digital format. On the other hand, for submitters to send in one written and duly signed copy will serve two useful purposes: it will serve to authenticate the digital submission that it accompanies and it will serve as the copy needed for the archives for general synod. Having this as a guideline will alleviate the convening church from having to make at least one hard copy of all digital submissions for the purpose of the archives of general synod.
- 3.3 Having searchable text PDF documents (as opposed to picture PDF) for synod delegates is very important since synod members need to both search through the text of the submissions as well as “copy and paste” when it comes time to formulate advisory reports. Thus it is advisable for this expectation to be laid out in the Guidelines for Synod and that the convening church ask churches (and other submitters) for searchable text PDF documents in order to avoid as much unnecessary work as possible for the convening church. When such a submission proves unfeasible on the part of the submitter, the convening church shall endeavour, as much as feasible, to provide a searchable text PDF of the submission.
- 3.4 It will be useful for the convening church to ask the churches (and other submitters) to send in submissions on one topic per document. In the event that more topics are sent in under one submission, the convening church is free to decide how best to handle it and where to place it on the proposed agenda.
- 3.5 The addition to Guideline I.A. as suggested in the report is helpful in that it clarifies for the convening church that it has the necessary flexibility in handling the practical affairs related to receiving, organizing, and distributing submissions to general synod.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express gratitude to the four brothers for their helpful report.
- 4.2 To change the following Guidelines to read:

4.2.1 **Guideline I.A.**

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

All material for Synod should be received by the convening church in paper or digital format (searchable text PDF as much as feasible) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of general synod. Those submitting material shall ensure that one signed copy is available for the archives of General Synod. Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.

4.2.2 **Guideline I.E**

All material for Synod should be received by the convening church in paper or digital format (searchable text PDF as much as feasible) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of general synod. Those submitting material shall ensure that one signed copy is available for the archives of General Synod. Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.

4.3 To add to **Guideline I.A.** the following:

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.

4.4 To send a copy of the updated Guidelines to the convening church of the next general synod to assist in their preparations.

ADOPTED

During discussion, the following **amendment** had been moved, seconded and **adopted**:

To replace in recommendations 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 the words:

All material for Synod should be received by the convening Church (in digital format (searchable text PDF as much as feasible) and one signed paper copy for the archives of general synod) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of General Synod.

with the words:

All material for Synod should be received by the convening church in paper or digital format (searchable text PDF as much as feasible) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of general synod. Those submitting material shall ensure that one signed copy is available for the archives of General Synod

Article 123 – CPTPF (Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding)

1. Material

1.1 Report from the Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding (CPTPF) (8.2.8)

2. Observations

2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 64) decided:

- [4.1] To express gratitude to the Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC and its committee for the work it has done;
- [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.

2.3 The Committee reports which students were funded by the program in the summers of 2016, 2017, and 2018.

2.4 The Committee reports that in 2016, 2017, and 2018 its books were audited, and its records were found to be in good order.

3. Consideration

3.1 The Committee has done its work with dedication and accountability and the funding program has worked well.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express gratitude to the Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC and its committee for the work it has done;
- 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 6 months prior to the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 124 – DGK (The Reformed Churches [in The Netherlands])

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Subcommittee Reformed churches in The Netherlands of the Committee on relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA-SRN) regarding The Reformed Churches (DGK) (8.2.2.2)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Flamborough-Redemption (8.3.1.1.2), Attercliffe (8.3.1.10)
- 1.3 Letter from Deputies Contact Churches Abroad of De Gereformeerde Kerken (8.2.2.12)
- 1.4 Letter from DGK Marienberg (8.2.2.6)

2. Observations

2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 117) decided:

[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)

- 2.2 The Subcommittee on relations with the Netherlands (SRN) maintained contact with the DGK through correspondence and a face-to-face meeting. The subcommittee reiterated the position of GS 2013 and GS 2016 that the EF which the DGK has with the LRCA remains an impediment to closer contact. The DGK had attempted to set up a three-way meeting between themselves, the LRCA and the SRN, but the LRCA declined to participate. At a two-way meeting between the DGK and the SRN, the SRN pressed upon the DGK that the picture the LRCA gives of the CanRC is not correct. Further, the SRN laid out that under the banner of the Lord's church-gathering work our sister churches do not need to have precisely the same practices as we have on topics as fencing the Lord's Supper table or members' commitment to the confessions; these are instead the sort of topics that continue to be discussed as fitting opportunities present themselves.
- 2.3 At their 2018 Synod the DGK decide to maintain their sister church relationship with the LRCA. Of significance, though, is that this Synod instructed deputies for contact with the LRCA to engage that sister-church in a discussion about the catholicity of the church. Whereas in the past the DGK had been critical of the Westminster Confession (and so of churches embracing this Confession), it appears that the DGK now no longer considers this Confession to be unfaithful or not in harmony with Scripture.
- 2.4 The SRN conveyed to the DGK the CanRC's concerns with the GKv. The DGK were heartened by the SRN's analysis and the CanRC's position concerning the GKv. As a result of their 2018 Synod their deputies attending the 2018 FRCA Synod expressed the wish of the DGK to have further talks with the CanRC.
- 2.5 The SRN encouraged the DGK to engage in further discussions with the GKN with a view to working towards unity.
- 2.6 The SRN considers it important that the CanRC maintain some form of contact with the DGK and recommend that we continue to monitor developments within this small federation even though they maintain their relationship with the LRCA.
- 2.7 Deputies from DGK responsible for Contact Churches Abroad sent a letter of greetings to GS 2019. In their letter they drew attention to a decision made at the very first DGK Synod Mariënberg 2005 where they decided that they would "seek ecclesiastical unity with all who want to live on the foundation of Scripture, confession (which means the Three Forms of Unity and/or the **Westminster Confession**) and the Dort Church Order" (bolding theirs). They add: "This entails that churches with the Westminster Confession can be considered for a sister church relationship."
- 2.8 Via a letter, "De Gereformeerde Kerk Mariënberg e.o." advised Synod of injustices they feel happened to them at the hand of hierarchical decisions made by the DGK, resulting in their removal from that federation of churches. They suggest that the SRN report was incorrect when that report states that this church "placed itself outside the federation." As a result of their experiences, they also urge caution upon us in our contacts with DGK.

- 2.9 The Flamborough-Redemption CanRC desires GS 2019 to instruct the CRCA to communicate clearly to the DGK that their relationship with the LRCA remains an obstacle for the CanRC entering into a relationship with them.
- 2.10 The Attercliffe CanRC draws attention to the disappointment the DGK expressed concerning “the lack of discussion between our two church federations on the matter of fencing the table of the Lord and confessional membership, and the decision of Synod Dunnville to state that there is no longer need to talk about these issues.” Attercliffe expresses her conviction that these matters were never discussed, or if they were, they have not been reported to the churches. On the other hand, Attercliffe does support the recommendation that contact should be maintained and suggests that further discussions on the points mentioned above would be beneficial.

3. Consideration

- 3.1 The development within the DGK to be more receptive to the Westminster Confession (and so to have a greater eye for the world-wide church gathering work of the Lord) is to be noted with gratitude.
- 3.2 The relation the DGK have with the LRCA continues to be an impediment to increased relations between the CanRC and the DGK because the LRCA broke away from the CanRC precisely because of their opposition to our sister relationships with churches of Presbyterian identity.
- 3.3 The letter concerning perceived hierarchical activities within the DGK can be received for information, without prejudice to its accuracy.
- 3.4 GS 2016 (Art. 49, Cons. 3.3) addressed Attercliffe’s concern.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1. To thank deputies for their work and discharge them;
- 4.2. To maintain contact with The Reformed Churches (DGK) and mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to the relationship between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA).

ADOPTED

Article 125 – GKN (Reformed Churches The Netherlands)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report from the Subcommittee Reformed churches in The Netherlands of the Committee on relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA-SRN) regarding Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN; formerly GKNvv) (8.2.2.3)
- 1.2 Supplemental Report from the CRCA-SRN re: GKN sister church request (8.2.2.5)
- 1.3 Letter from the following church: Flamborough-Redemption (8.3.1.1.4)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 118) decided

- [4.1] To maintain contact with the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKNvv) and continue to monitor developments within this federation
- 2.2 The SRN maintained contact with the GKN through correspondence and a face-to-face meeting. In the latter meeting the brothers of the GKN expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet and provided an update on 1. The developments in the GKN and 2. Their discussions with the DGK.
- 2.2.1 The churches of this young federation (2009) were quite independent, with a loose and problematic cooperation between the churches. This has now changed so that the federation is structured in accordance with the Church Order of Dort. Due to their size they have no classes or regional synods, but they meet in General Synod twice a year. Their recent GS reflected improved harmonious cooperation. This small federation consists of 7 instituted churches and 6 preaching points. Among its ministers are two who in time past have served in the CanRC.
- 2.2.2 There were some initial positive steps toward improved contact and discussions between the GKN and the DGK. However, this contact was terminated from GKN side because writings with the DGK appeared to label the GKN as schismatic. Efforts are underway to open up this contact again. The GKN wishes to focus its inter-church relations on Europe plus the former sister churches, ie, the FRCA, CanRC and the FRCSA. They have already requested a sister church relationship with the FRCA and hope to make a similar request to the CanRC at their next Synod.
- 2.3 The SRN expresses understanding for “the difficulties that may exist in a small federation as well as the need for a soundboard,” and recommends that “some form of contact be maintained with the GKN.”
- 2.4 In a supplementary report to GS 2018, the SRN advises that the GKN have requested that a sister church relationship be established between the CanRC and the GKN. After digesting the request, the SRN recommends that GS 2019 not establish sister relations with the GKN on grounds that the ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands is still too fluid. The SRN:
- Expects more people to leave the GKv in the coming years;
 - Sees wisdom in awaiting the outcome of discussions between the GKN and the DGK;
 - Mentions that exercising patience on this matter is in line with the decision of the FRCA.
- The SRN recommends that this request be referred to the CRCA for further consideration.
- 2.5 The Flamborough-Redemption CanRC recommends that Synod mandate the CRCA to “initiate greater communication and dialogue with the GKN with the intent to establish a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with them.” They make this recommendation because the GKN “appears to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ, with similar theological positions and practices to the CanRC.”

3. Consideration

- 3.1 The development within the GKN in relation to adherence to the Church Order of Dort is to be noted with gratitude.
- 3.2 The efforts to open up avenues of communication with the DGK is to be noted with gratitude.
- 3.3 Given the fluidity of the ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands, the request to establish sister church relations with the GKN is premature.
- 3.4 Being available for further dialogue is one way in which we can provide assistance to this small federation as they seek to find their way forward after their departure from the GKv.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To maintain contact with The Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN)
- 4.2 To instruct the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.2.1 To monitor developments within the GKN;
 - 4.2.2 To consider the request from the GKN to establish sister relations;
 - 4.2.3 To be available for dialogue with the GKN when needed.
 - 4.2.4 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 126 – URCNA (United Reformed Churches in North America)

Committee 5 presented draft 1 of a report on the URCNA. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 127 – CWeb (Committee for the Official Website)

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on the Official Website. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 128 – CRCA (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad) - general

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) (8.2.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Burlington-Rehoboth (8.3.1.8), Attercliffe (8.3.1.9)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The Committee on relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) completed its mandate with the involvement of seven individuals and one mission board: 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.J. Pol (Indonesia), and Rev. H. Versteeg (Indonesia), Smithville CanRC Timor Mission Board.

- 2.2 Br. J. VanLaar has served the CRCA for nine years.
- 2.3 Correspondence was received by churches that were not included in the CRCA's mandate: Independent Evangelical-Reformed Church (Germany), Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary & area).
- 2.4 GS 2013 (Art. 81, Cons. 3) suggests that proposals for relationships with the CanRC must come via our minor assemblies (referring to GS 1998, Art. 98, Cons. III.A). The CRCA observes that our way of receiving and processing requests for relationships is rather puzzling to churches abroad.
- 2.5 With The Netherlands returning to the responsibility of the CRCA, the workload of the CRCA will increase.
- 2.6 The CRCA requests access to submissions from CanRC in response to CRCA reports to synods because they find it helpful to know the thinking of the churches.
- 2.7 Burlington-Rehoboth does not agree to send submissions from CanRCs in response to reports to synods. It contends if these letters are passed on to the committee, they could begin to live a life of their own and the CRCA will start its work on ideas from the churches with which Synod did not agree. Burlington-Rehoboth also contends that letters from the churches addressing matters pertaining to the CRCA are addressed to Synod, not the committee.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CRCA has diligently carried out its mandate.
- 3.2 The logical point of contact with the CanRC for a church abroad is often the CRCA, not a local CanRC.
- 3.3 If a foreign church contacts the CanRC through the CRCA, it is proper for the CRCA to respond.
- 3.4 It is improper for the CRCA to proceed towards intensifying this contact towards Ecclesiastical Fellowship without having an explicit mandate from the churches via synod to do so.
- 3.5 In view of the increased workload it is advisable to increase the CRCA from 6 to 7 members, as the 4-member CRCA-SRN has been dissolved.
- 3.6 It can be beneficial to the CRCA to have access after Synod to the responses from the churches to their report addressed to Synod in order to better understand particular points made.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To thank the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and those who assisted the committee in its work.
- 4.2 To thank br. J. VanLaar for his work and release him from the committee.;
- 4.3 To expand the CRCA to seven members.
- 4.4 To give the CRCA approval to request relevant documentation per Consideration 3.6 from the church responsible for the archives of general synods.
- 4.5 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.5.1 To continue its contact with the churches abroad that synod has approved;
 - 4.5.2 To report on any contact received from a church that seeks contact with the CanRC;

- 4.5.3 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;
- 4.5.4 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 129 – SCBP (Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*)

Committee 1 presented draft 1 of a report on the SCBP. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 130 – Hamilton Blessings re: RSE Nov. 2018 Art. 8 (amendment to CO Art. 55)

1. Material

- 1.1 Appeal to GS 2019 from the Hamilton-Blessings CanRC re: RSE Nov. 2018 Art. 8 (amendment to CO Article 55) (8.6.8.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Grand Rapids (8.6.8.1.1); Lincoln-Vineyard (8.6.8.1.2); Chilliwack (8.6.8.1.3); Winnipeg-Redeemer (8.6.8.1.4); Guelph-Emmanuel (8.6.8.1.5).

2. Admissibility

- 2.1 Grand Rapids urges Synod to declare this submission inadmissible on the grounds that it was received “very late, only 7 days before the cut off date for material to be submitted to Synod. This request involves a substantial change to the Church Order. The consistory of Grand Rapids could not deal with this in a thorough manner, nor, do we believe, could any of the other churches.” The Guelph-Emmanuel church echoes the same complaint about not having enough time to consider the material properly.
- 2.2 Chilliwack believes that the desire of Hamilton-Blessings to see Article 55 of the Church Order amended does not constitute an appeal but is actually an overture and should therefore have been sent to the churches via Regional Synod 5 months prior to GS 2019.
- 2.3 GS 2019 notes that the proposed amendment did come to RSE Nov. 2018 from Classis Central Ontario (CCO), where it was denied. By appealing this decision to GS 2019, Hamilton-Blessings is simply continuing the discussion in the ecclesiastical way. Since this is an appeal against a decision of RSE Nov. 2018, and it was submitted within the given deadline, **Synod deems this appeal admissible.**

3. Observations

- 3.1 RSE Nov. 2018 received the following overture from CCO Sep. 2018, originating from the Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington:
“Classis Central Ontario overtures the 2018 Regional Synod East to overture the 2019 General Synod to amend article 55 of the Church Order to read: *The 150 psalms shall have the principal place in public worship. The metrical psalms and hymns adopted by General Synod, as well as songs approved by consistory that faithfully reflect the*

teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, shall be sung in public worship.”

- 3.2 RSE Nov. 2018 did not adopt the overture.
- 3.3 Hamilton-Blessings objects to the considerations brought forward by RSE Nov. 2018 as follows:
- [1.] In coming to its decision, RSE–Nov.18 considered: “The overture fails to address the historical reasons for why the churches have made the choice of songs for worship a matter for the churches in common” (Consideration 2).
- a) RSE–Nov.18 underscores an absence of historical research into the rationale for status quo but does not indicate why this research is pertinent.
- b) RSE–Nov.18 erroneously concludes that the overture denies that the choice of songs for worship is a matter for the churches in common. The overture clearly affirms a role for General Synod but not in a way to exclude consistorial freedom to select songs as well.
- [2.] In coming to its decision, RSE–Nov.18 considered: “General synod determines what the churches sing with input from all the churches, after hearing the advice of experts and only after careful deliberation. The proposed amendment would allow local consistories to add songs to what the general synod decides but it would be difficult for each local consistory to find access to both a panel of experts and wide-spread consultation. Out of mutual concern for one another as churches of one federation, it is better to honour the time-tested practice of cooperating together as churches in this matter” (Consideration 3).
- a) RSE–Nov.18 alleges that it would be difficult for each local consistory to find access to a panel of expert and widespread consultation but it does not prove why this lack of access would necessarily hinder churches. To make this case, it would need to be demonstrated that such a policy is impeding the ministry and/or worship of those churches who have it, e.g., the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (see the Overture Consideration 7).
- b) RSE–Nov.18 alleges that it is better to honour the “time-tested practice of cooperating together as churches in this matter” but erroneously concludes that offering consistories freedom to choose some songs necessarily excludes the possibility of mutual concern or cooperation (see 4b below).
- [3.] In coming to its decision, RSE–Nov.18 considered: “A number of churches correctly point out the subjective nature of several observations and considerations in the overture. Assertions that the Genevan tunes are “too difficult to sing well in corporate worship,” that “there is a growing disconnect between the younger generations and the Genevan settings of the psalms,” that “the Genevan tunes are losing their cultural relevance,” that “Genevan exclusivity is becoming a hindrance to missional activity and church planting” and that there is a “lacuna of hymns” in the Book of Praise on certain events in Christ’s ministry, are all poorly supported. Several churches offer their own observations and experiences to assert the opposite. Such personal accounts and assertions (from either direction) in the end prove little, because they are simply subjective opinions” (Consideration 4).

- a) By reducing the grounds of the overture to something “subjective,” RSE–Nov.18 failed to interact with the objective research mentioned in Observation 2 of the overture, the objective difficulty church plants and missional churches are having (see the Overture Observation 9) and the objective fact that fewer and fewer Book of Praise songs are sung at Canadian Reformed weddings and funerals (see the Overture Observation 5).
- b) Further, RSE–Nov.18 failed to recognize that the overture did not intend to argue that everyone was unhappy with the Genevan tunes but that especially in missional churches (and other churches surveyed) some found many of them difficult to sing. The overture, in other words, nowhere disputes that the Genevan tunes are loved by some; it contends that the Genevan tunes are difficult to sing by others. Further, the overture does not seek to remove the approved songs in the Book of Praise (in which case the expressed affection of some is relevant); it seeks the liberty for consistories to select songs beyond those synodically approved (for which case the discontent of others is relevant).
- c) RSE–Nov.18 claimed that the alleged “lacuna of hymns” in the Book of Praise on certain events in Christ’s ministry “is poorly supported” when the overture’s assertion is self-evident.

There are precious few hymns about the event of Christ’s birth and even fewer about the event of Christ’s death (compared to those about his resurrection [7 hymns] and ascension [7 hymns]). There’s only one hymn about the event of Christ’s birth (Hymn 21), besides a pre- natal hymn (Hymn 20) and a post-natal (Hymn 22) hymn. Only one of the hymns (Hymns 23, 26, 43, 57, 75) that mentions the cross is actually about the event of Christ’s death (Hymn 26). The Trinity Psalter Hymnal, by comparison, has numerous hymns about both events. RSE– Nov.18 also failed to acknowledge the objective fact that some churches in Classis Central Ontario, in order to be able to sing many songs about Christ’s birth and death, must have Christmas and Good Friday programs instead of worship services (see Overture Observation 6).

- [4.] In coming to its decision, RSE–Nov.18 considered: “The overture observes that local consistories exercise more authority over which Bible translations they use than in choosing songs to be sung in worship services. However, the churches have long cooperated in carefully evaluating and recommending Bible translations (via general synod)” (Consideration 5).
- a) RSE–Nov.18 mentions the incongruence but fails to acknowledge its relevance and in fact tries to diminish its import by indicating that churches still cooperate in the matter of Bible translations.
- b) RSE–Nov.18 fails to recognize that the adoption of the overture could create a protocol that exactly parallels that of Bible translations—namely, mutual cooperation in the areas of song evaluation and recommendation but consistorial freedom in the area of approval.
- [5.] In coming to its decision, RSE–Nov.18 considered: “The scriptural injunction to be ‘singing a new song’ (Rev. 14:3) does not prove that new songs need to be continually added to existing collections” (Consideration 6).

- a) Here RSE–Nov.18 seems to contradict Scripture outright by claiming that the command to sing a new song does not prove that new songs should be sung (in church at least). This begs the question: how then can this injunction be possibly obeyed in terms of worship songs sung in church if new songs are not continually added? It seems as if RSE–Nov.18 is recommending, at best, occasional obedience to Scripture.
- b) Here RSE–Nov.18 ignores the observation that our churches, becoming increasingly intercultural, are increasingly less populated by Dutch immigrants for whom the songs of the Book of Praise are especially well-loved (see Overture observation 4).
- [6.] In coming to its decision, RSE–Nov.18 considered: “Although singing from the same song book does help give expression to our unity as churches, the deeper concern is, as Lincoln-Vineyard puts it, ‘that we maintain faithfulness and unity and uniformity in doctrine’ (emphasis added).”
Hamilton-Blessings argues:
- a) Here RSE–Nov.18 fails to prove how a prescribed songbook ensures faithfulness while consistorial freedom to choose songs for worship does not. There are many unfaithful churches still singing faithful hymns as there are faithful churches whose eldership are free to choose songs for worship. Further, RSE–Nov.18 neglects the precise wording of the proposed amendment—namely, that the songs approved by consistory must “faithfully reflect the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity.”
- b) Finally, RSE–18 fails to recognize that a better safeguard for sound theology is located in office-bearers who have signed the form of Subscription.
- [7.] In coming to its decision, RSE–Nov.18 considered: “The overture asserts that “various churches have lost confidence in the process” of having new songs approved. Between 2001 and 2013 a number of new hymns were approved by general synod for testing in the churches and at the end of that process 19 new hymns were added. Although for some the process may be too slow, the church of Lincoln-Vineyard notes that for others the speed may be too fast” (Consideration 9).
- a) Here RSE–18 unwittingly provides an argument for consistorial freedom in the selection of worship songs. The current process is judged to be too fast by some and too slow by others.
By providing consistories liberty in area enables each congregation could proceed as slowly or as quickly as one likes.

3.4 Hamilton-Blessings concludes its appeal in the form of two questions.

- [1.] We therefore ask General Synod Edmonton-Immanuel (2019) to judge that Regional Synod East — November 14, 2018 erred in its decision to deny the overture from Classis Central Ontario— September 6–7, 2018 regarding amending Church Order Article 55.
- [2.] We ask, secondly, that General Synod Edmonton-Immanuel (2019) weigh the Observations and Considerations of the overture from Classis Central Ontario-September 6-7, 2018 and that General Synod “amend article 55 of the Church Order to read: The 150 psalms shall have the principal place in public worship. The

metrical psalms and hymns adopted by General Synod, as well as songs approved by consistory that faithfully reflect the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, shall be sung in public worship.”

- 3.5 Grand Rapids indicates its agreement with the decision of RSE Nov. 2018 and is of the opinion that many of the arguments Hamilton-Blessings has brought forward are subjective.
- 3.6 Lincoln-Vineyard does not object to adding new hymns to the *Book of Praise*, but is of the opinion that Hamilton-Blessings does not prove this necessitates a change to Article 55. To agree to their appeal would be a move “in the direction of congregationalism.” Mutual concern for each other should mean recognizing the need to work together so that all the churches would be better equipped to be “missional.” The letter from Winnipeg-Redeemer points in the same direction, while also suggesting that “the adoption of the *Trinity Hymnal* would allow for a much broader song selection, as Blessings appeals for and as the overture proposes, but with the greater benefit of being adopted for use in all the churches of the federation, thereby continuing to promote both unity of song and doctrine in our worship service singing.”
- 3.7 Lincoln-Vineyard explains that some Psalms are not often sung can be because of the content rather than that the melodies are difficult.
- 3.8 Lincoln-Vineyard notes that if the text and tune do not correspond to each other, the problem “is not addressed or solved by having the congregation sing songs approved by the consistories.” There is a protocol for changes.
- 3.9 Lincoln-Vineyard deems the argument that consistories are free to choose Bible translations as irrelevant, since those have “been reviewed by the churches, and have been judged to be trustworthy translations. There is no such provision in this overture with respect to the songs which would be approved by local consistories.”
- 3.10 Grand Rapids states that the claim that Article 55 undermines the Church Order is an assertion without proof. Lincoln-Vineyard elaborates, “Article 55 does not cede consistorial authority to General Synod”; Hamilton-Blessings asserts that “the current practice in the Canadian Reformed Churches is not in line with the historic use of psalms in worship, or passages like Colossians 3:16,” but this misrepresents the provision of Article 55.
- 3.11 Lincoln-Vineyard notes that frustrations with the process for changing the *Book of Praise* do not require a change in the Church Order and that the process and the pace of adopting additional hymns are driven by the churches themselves. The concern is not “to develop and preserve liturgical uniformity for its own sake.” The concern as reflected in Article 55 of the Church Order is to “maintain faithfulness and unity and uniformity in doctrine.” In this regard, Lincoln-Vineyard also notes that the preaching and teaching of a pastor are not only subject to the consistory but are “also subject to the judgment of the broader assemblies.”

4. Considerations

- 4.1 Hamilton-Blessings indicates that RSE Nov. 2018 should have shown why historical arguments for the status quo in regard to Article 55 are relevant. This shifts the burden of proof to the wrong party. Someone who wishes to argue for change should be the one to investigate the grounds for the current situation and show why change is needed.

- 4.2 As Article 55 indicates, the churches have agreed to determine together what songs are to be used in the public worship services. Giving freedom to consistories to select songs next to the adopted Psalms and approved Hymns by route of an appeal instead of an overture does not give the churches sufficient time to process such a change according to CO Art. 76.
- 4.3 Hamilton-Blessings assumes that the different approach taken by the URCNA and the OPC in this matter (greater freedom locally) is superior, using their assumption as proof for why Article 55 should be changed. However, they do not show how it might be superior.
- 4.4 While Hamilton-Blessings states that “offering consistories freedom to choose some songs” would include “the possibility of mutual concern or cooperation,” they do not demonstrate that the current structure of collaboration as agreed to by common consent in Article 55 is inconsistent with Scripture.
- 4.5 Changing CO Art. 55 as suggested by Hamilton-Blessings opens the way for less balanced, less well-considered choices than would happen by a deliberative body representing the churches together.
- 4.6 The argument based on the freedom of local consistories to choose between various Bible translations does not prove the point Hamilton-Blessings is trying to make, since general synods give prior attention to Bible translations.
- 4.7 Hamilton-Blessings objects to Consideration 6 of RSE Nov. 2018 that “The scriptural injunction to be ‘singing a new song’ (Rev. 14:3) does not prove that new songs need to be continually added to existing collections” (Consideration 6). Revelation 14:3 is not an “injunction,” but a description of the singing of the redeemed in heaven. New phases in redemptive history are reflected in Bible passages that refer to or that call for the singing of a “new song.” Although the Consideration of RSE-Nov. 18 could have been worded better, it cannot be sustained that RSE Nov. 2108 is recommending occasional obedience to Scripture, as Hamilton-Blessings suggests.
- 4.8 Hamilton-Blessings contends that “RSE–Nov.18 fails to prove how a prescribed songbook ensures faithfulness while consistorial freedom to choose songs for worship does not.” As Hamilton-Blessings points out, neither of the two approaches can guarantee faithfulness. However, their argument leaves untouched the fact that a collective approach by a larger body such as synod can provide a safeguard against local decisions concerning which “new” songs to sing that may not be well thought out.
- 4.9 The addition of only 19 new hymns between 2001 and 2013 as indicated by Hamilton-Blessings is indeed a pace that is not satisfactory for various churches in our federation. However, this does not by definition suggest a need to change the Church Order. Rather, thought could be given to creative ways to address the needs expressed by the churches within the parameters of Article 55, which until now has proven to work well for the churches.

5. Recommendation

That Synod deny the appeal of the Hamilton-Blessings CanRC re: RSE Nov. 2018 Art. 8.

ADOPTED

Article 131 – Closing Devotions

A few housekeeping matters were addressed.

The Rev. Slaa led in evening devotions. He read Isaiah 40:27-31 and spoke some words of meditation. He had those present sing Hymn 13 and led in prayer remembering the Indonesian churches, the Dutch churches, and our singing during worship.

Before adjournment the Rev. Yonson Dethan spoke some words of gratitude on behalf of the GGRC.

Synod was adjourned until 9:00am the next day.

Day 8 — Morning Session
Thursday, May 23, 2019

Article 132 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman read Psalm 119:49-56, spoke some words, led in prayer, and had those present sing Psalm 119:20,21,22. He noted all synod members were present. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.

Article 133 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 134 – Appeal of C. Sloots re: RSE May 2018 art. 7

This matter was dealt with by Synod in closed-restricted session, with credentialed delegates from sister churches present, and with Elder Bremer absent.

Committee 2 presented draft 1 of a report on an appeal from sr. C. Sloots (8.6.4.2). The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 135 – Overtures – RSW 2018 regarding *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal*

Committee 4 presented draft 2 of a report on overtures from RSW 2018 regarding the *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal*. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 136 – RCNZ (Reformed Churches in New Zealand)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ) (8.2.2.1)

2. Observations

- 2.1 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 on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to send a delegation to the next RCNZ Synod in 2017.
- 2.2 Rev. J. de Gelder attended the RCNZ Synod in 2017. He was able to lead three church polity conferences in the RCNZ.
- 2.3 The RCNZ has downgraded their relationship with the Christian Reformed Church of Australia from sister church to 'ecumenical fellowship'.
- 2.4 The RCNZ do not have a federation seminary. Students of the RCNZ attend the Reformed Theological Seminary in Geelong, Australia, or Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

- 2.5 The RCNZ have been diligent and consistent in their ecclesiastical relations, both in maintaining and promoting unity with true and faithful churches and in raising concerns with sister churches. Unless there is repentance, RCNZ intends to terminate their sister church relationship with the GKv at their next synod.
- 2.6 The fraternal delegate, br. Leo DeVos, expressed deep gratitude on behalf of the RCNZ for the good cooperation with the Toronto-Bethel CanRC and the Armadale FRCA in mission work in PNG.

3. Considerations

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

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 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 mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.2.1 To express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua New Guinea;
 - 4.2.2 To send a delegation to the RCNZ Synod at least once every three years;
 - 4.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 137 – CRCA & CCCNA Combined Report

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on the request from the CRCA and CCCNA for a study mandate. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 138 – Appeal of Tintern Spring Creek re: GS 2016 Art. 103 (Confidentiality)

This matter was dealt with by Synod in closed session.

Committee 3 presented draft 1 of a report on the appeal from the Tintern Spring Creek CanRC regarding the confidentiality of GS 2016 Art. 103. The report was discussed. The committee took the report back for refinement.

Article 139 – URCNA (United Reformed Churches in North America)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Church Unity – Coordinators (CCU-C) (8.2.4.1), Report of Subcommittee for Liturgical Forms and Confessions (CCU-SLFC) (8.2.4.2), Report of Subcommittee for Theological Education (CCU-STE) (8.2.4.3). *(Post-synod it became clear that the report of the Subcommittee for the Church Order (CCU-SCO) had been*

missed. The reason is possibly that the CCU-SCO report was only available digitally while the CCU-SLFC report was only available in print.)

- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Winnipeg-Redeemer (8.3.3.1), Barrhead (8.3.3.2), Attercliffe (8.3.3.3), Lynden (8.3.3.4)

2. Observations

2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 77) decided regarding the URCNA:

- [4.1] That the Coordinators for the Committee of Church Unity (CCU-C) have completed their mandate given by GS 2013;
- [4.2] To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) (Phase 2) with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) under the adopted rules;
- [4.3] To encourage the churches to continue to foster relationships with local URCNA churches. These activities could include, but are not limited to, pulpit exchanges, joint community and mission projects, and joint study opportunities;
- [4.4] To reappoint the CCU-C, adding two additional coordinators, and mandating them:
 - [4.4.1] To seek ways to facilitate the work of building unity on the local levels, as well as visiting churches and classes of the URCNA, particularly in the United States;
 - [4.4.2] To discuss with CERCU how to make progress towards federative unity should Synod Wyoming mandate CERCU to pursue this;
 - [4.4.3] To monitor any developments in the URCNA with respect to “doctrinal affirmations.”

2.2 Activities of the Coordinators

- 2.2.1 The Rev. W. den Hollander and the Rev. C.J. VanderVelde attended a breakfast meeting consisting of Niagara-area CanRC and URCNA ministers in Jordan, Ontario to discuss the decisions of GS 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. They also attended a few days of Synod Wyoming 2016, in which Rev. VanderVelde brought fraternal greetings.
- 2.2.2 The four coordinators appointed by GS 2016 met for the first time after Synod on Sept 9, 2016 for a meeting together at Binbrook, Ontario. They reviewed their mandate as coordinators for the CCU, reviewed the decisions of Synod Wyoming 2016 and how they impacted their work as coordinators, discussed how to deal with invitations from URCNA classes, to send a fraternal delegate to their classes.
- 2.2.3 One or more of the coordinators attended a variety of meetings in the effort to promote unity. This included the following: Classis Southwestern Ontario Sept 21, 2016, held at Sheffield, CERCU on Nov 9, 2016 held in conjunction with NAPARC, Synod Wheaton of the URCNA, June 11-15, 2018, breakfast meeting with the Rev. John Bouwers and the Rev. Steve Swets, both members of the URCNA’s CERCU, at their invitation, and Rev. den Hollander and Rev. W.B. Slomp were scheduled to meet with CERCU at the occasion of the upcoming NAPARC meeting at Philadelphia in Nov, 2018.
- 2.2.4 Several 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.

- 2.3 **Other Developments.** Classis Manitoba of the CanRC was held concurrently with Classis Central US of the URCNA on April 3-4 at Christ Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Classis Niagara of the CanRC did the same with Classis Ontario-East of the URCNA at Wellandport United Reformed Church. Classis Ontario West of the CanRC was scheduled to do the same with Classis Southwestern Ontario of the URCNA, but this was postponed.
- 2.4 **Synod Wyoming on Unity Matters.** There were three important overtures on the agenda of Synod Wyoming 2016 in relation to unity efforts. In one or another, these overtures would significantly slow down the unity process, if not halt it altogether for the foreseeable future. The first and third overtures were defeated. The second overture coming from Classis Pacific Northwest Oct 14-15, 2014 asked Synod “to declare that the Proposed Joint Church Order is unusable for that purpose.” Synod Wyoming did not declare it “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.” This is a disappointing conclusion and shows that we are far away from agreement on some church polity matters. The coordinators note that since Synod London 2010, every successive URCNA Synod has taken steam out of 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 further notes: it is hard not to be discouraged by all these developments. And yet the coordinators are 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. The process of getting to know one another better continues and there has been much mutual encouragement.
- 2.5 **Synod Wyoming on Other Matters.** Synod Wyoming 2016 unanimously adopted the proposed hymns to be the hymn portion of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* and this means the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* was ready to be published. It was published in 2018. Synod Wyoming made a number of decisions with respect to contact with churches abroad. They agreed to the recommendation of the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Church Abroad (CECCA) and decided to remain in Ecumenical Contact (Phase One of ecumenical relations) with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv), to enter into Ecumenical Contact with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI-NTT) and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA). They also agreed to enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (EF) (Phase Two) with the Reformed Calvinist Churches [in Indonesia] (GGRC), the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC).
- 2.6 **Synod Wheaton on Unity and Other Matters.** Synod Wheaton 2018 of the URCNA met concurrently with the general Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In a combined meeting, the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* was presented, received joyfully, and the churches of both the URCNA and OPC were encouraged to make use of it. Synod also adopted a number of recommendations submitted by CERCU. 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.” The Rev. W. Den Hollander and the Rev. W.B. Slomp were received as fraternal delegates and the address by the latter was well received. Synod Wheaton entered into Ecumenical Contact (Phase 1) with the African Evangelical Presbyterian Church as well as entered into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase 2) with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW.) It also decided to discontinue the relationship of Ecumenical Contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv) due to their decision to open all offices in the church to women, regardless of many and repeated admonitions. The same Synod, at different times, also paid attention to the work of mission (both domestic and foreign) executed by the respective federations of churches. Synod Wheaton also adopted without dissent the “Affirmations Regarding Marriage” as a doctrinal affirmation. No other doctrinal affirmations were adopted since the CCU report to GS 2016.

- 2.7 **Considerations from CCU-C.** CCU-C requests GS 2019 to consider the following with a view to disbanding the CCU – including the coordinators, the subcommittees and related committees – and handing the URCNA portfolio over to the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA).
- 2.7.1 Synod Wyoming 2016 decided to enter into 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 also noteworthy that the CERCU reports 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.
- 2.7.2 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 matters.
- 2.7.3 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.

- 2.7.4 Giving the URCNA portfolio to the CCCNA will take the 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.
- 2.7.5 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.
- 2.8 **Recommendations from CCU-C.** They 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.
- 2.9 Winnipeg-Redeemer supports the CCU recommendations and requests Synod to indicate strongly that this does not mean that the Canadian Reformed Churches are abandoning their desire to proceed toward full and complete unity with the URCNA. Barrhead and Attercliffe also support the CCU recommendations. Lynden supports the CCU recommendations and requests GS 2019 to respect the decision of Synod Wyoming 2016 and take a breather of 6 years from unity talks.
- 2.10 **Subcommittee for Liturgical Forms and Confessions** received the following mandate from Synod Dunnville: “to be available to review and compare the Creeds, Confessions, Forms and Prayers of the CanRC and the URCNA with a view to merger.” The

subcommittee learned the following from the Acts of the URCNA Synods. 1. Synod Wyoming 2016 adopted amendments to the wording of the Ecumenical Creeds, the Three Forms of Unity, the Liturgical Forms, and Prayers, as proposed by its Liturgical Forms Committee and variously amended at Synod. 2. Synod decided to publish the liturgical forms in a stand-alone book, distinct from the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. 3. The Agenda of Synod Wheaton 2018 of the URCNA calls the new stand alone book on the liturgical forms their “Forms and Prayers Book.” 4. Unlike earlier Synods, Synod Wyoming 2016 and Synod Wheaton 2018 opted not to appoint committee that could liaise with Canadian Reformed counterparts as our committee. The Subcommittee was not consulted by a Liturgical Forms Committee of the URCNA on the developments described in the first three points above. Their analysis is: our experience supports the commendation made by the Committee for Church Unity with the URCNA that Synod Edmonton not appoint new committees such as theirs. And their recommendation is for: Synod Edmonton not to appoint a subcommittee for Liturgical Forms and Confessions.

2.11 Subcommittee for Theological Education received the following mandate from GS 2019:

“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, they did not convene, as they had no conversation partners. Therefore they report that no progress toward church unity has been made by this sub-committee.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Synod agrees with the considerations provided by the CCU-C as provided above in observation 2.7. It does not make sense to reappoint coordinators for unity and subcommittees when the URCNA is taking a “breather” from these matters.
- 3.2 Synod agrees with the analysis provided by the Subcommittee for Liturgical Forms and Confessions as provided above in observation 2.10. The same applies to the Subcommittee for Theological Education.
- 3.3 Synod wishes to express that the CanRC remain committed to the pursuit of unity with the United Reformed Churches and are looking forward to reengaging in this discussion when the URCNA is ready.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 The Coordinators for the Committee for Church Unity (CCU-C) have completed their mandate given by GS 2016 to seek ways to facilitate the work of building unity on the local level, as well as visiting churches and Classes of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), particularly in the United States.
- 4.2 The CCU-C have completed their mandate given by Synod Dunnville 2016 to discuss with Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) of the URCNA how to make progress toward federative unity should Synod Wyoming mandate CERCU to pursue this.

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- 4.3 The CCU-C have completed their mandate given by GS 2016 to monitor any developments in the URCNA with respect to ‘doctrinal affirmations.’
 - 4.4 To not reappoint 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).
 - 4.5 To thank the coordinators and members of the various subcommittees for their work.
 - 4.6 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (phase 2) with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) under the adopted rules;
 - 4.7 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):
 - 4.7.1 To send a delegation to the synods of the URCNA;
 - 4.7.2 To encourage the churches to continue to foster relationships with local URCNA churches. These activities could include, but are not limited to, pulpit exchanges, joint community and mission projects, and study opportunities;
 - 4.7.3 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Synod was adjourned until 2:00pm for committee work.

Day 8 — Afternoon Session
Thursday, May 22, 2019

Article 140 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Hymn 77. He noted all synod members were present. A housekeeping matter was dealt with.

Confidential Article 141 – Appeal of C. Sloots re: RSE May 2018 art. 7 – Confidential

Confidential as per GS 2019 Art. 150.

Article 142 – Overtures – RSW 2018 regarding *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal*

1. Material

- 1.1 Letter from RSW Nov. 2018 re: overtures (8.4.1.1), including: Overture Classis Pacific East TPH - originating in Aldergrove CanRC (8.4.1); Overture Classis Manitoba TPH - originating in Denver ARC (8.4.2). RSW includes letters from: Nooksack Valley ARC (8.4.1.2), Chilliwack CanRC (8.4.1.4), Lynden ARC (8.4.1.5)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Dunnville (8.5.2), Elora (8.5.3), Fergus-North (8.5.4), Guelph-Living Word (8.5.5), Ottawa-Jubilee (8.5.6), Carman-West (8.5.7), Burlington-Ebenezer (8.5.8), Ancaster (8.5.9), Barrhead (8.5.12), Hamilton-Cornerstone (8.5.13), Grand Rapids (8.5.14), Toronto-Bethel (8.5.15), Calgary (8.5.16), Grassie-Covenant (8.5.17), Burlington-Fellowship (8.5.18), Glanbrook-Trinity (8.5.19), Lynden (8.5.20), Orangeville (8.5.21), Neerlandia-(North) (8.5.22), Fergus-Maranatha (8.5.24), St. Albert (8.5.25), Edmonton-Immanuel (8.5.26)

2. Observations

- 2.1 RSW 2018 decided:
 - 2.1.1 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;
 - 2.1.2 To submit the texts of both overtures and all letters received by RSW to GS 2019 for its consideration;
 - 2.1.3 To submit matters of interaction with the overtures and direction on the topic to GS 2019 for due consideration.
- 2.2 Overture Classis Pacific East submitted to GS 2019 by RSW 2018:

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 America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for use in public worship as per Article 55 of the Church Order.

Grounds:

- 2.2.1 In regard to the Psalm section of our Book of Praise: 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:

- (a) While the virtues of our current Psalm tunes are widely appreciated, church members desire a greater variety of musical style;
- (b) 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.
- (c) 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.

2.2.2 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).

2.2.3 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.urnca.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.

2.3 Overture Classis Manitoba submitted to GS 2019 by RSW 2018:

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.

The overture presents the following reasons:

- 2.3.1 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 Denver-Emmanuel ARC (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.
- 2.3.2 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).
- 2.3.3 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.
- 2.3.4 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.
- 2.3.5 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.

2.4 The Acts of RSW 2018 submitted to GS 2019 adds the following actions and considerations:

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- 2.4.1 RSW adopted and modified the overtures and interacted with the other materials in the following manner to give direction on this topic:
- 2.4.2 Those letters which were submitted as appeals were received as letters of the churches interacting with the overtures.
- 2.4.3 The overtures demonstrate a commonality in speaking about the Trinity Psalter-Hymnal (TPH) and its merits in addition to the Book of Praise (BoP).
- 2.4.4 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.
- 2.4.5 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.
- 2.4.6 There is great value in maintaining the principle of a federative approach to corporate worship. While not wanting to make exceptions to the rule, RSW acknowledges the uniqueness of certain congregations in their circumstances.
- 2.4.7 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.
- 2.4.8 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.
- 2.5 Letters forwarded to GS 2019 by RSW and letters interacting with the overture submitted to GS 2019 from the churches:
- 2.5.1 The Nooksack ARC states that the RSW overture proposes to bypass the work of the SCBP which previous synods have created precisely for the work of creating and establishing the music which the church sings. The 'grounds' used in the overture and the overture's reference to the 'glacial pace' of the SCBP are based on subjective and anecdotal arguments. The overture ignores the fact that Synod Chatham 2004 capped the number of hymns to be included in the *Book of Praise* (BoP) at 100 in an effort to continue to retain an acceptable balance between the number of Psalms and Hymns. Adoption of more than 400 hymns with such little reflection and deliberation is not in keeping with the spirit of decisions of Synod 1968, 1971, 2004. Subjective arguments are used to suggest that the Genevan melodies of the BoP are a hindrance to visitors to the worship services. Nooksack does not believe that the CanRC have unnecessarily 'isolated' themselves from the rest of the Reformed and Presbyterian world, that we 'get in line' with other Reformed and Presbyterian churches when it comes to our music tradition in worship, and that adopting the TPH would formalize many of the songs already being sung at family gatherings, informal congregational meetings, or professional meetings such as teacher's conventions, where a wide variety of hymns are often used. Nooksack asks the question: 'is it actually true that the music often employed at CanRC informal meetings will in fact be the music found in the new Trinity

Psalter Hymnal?. . . Over the years, the OPC and the publishers of the Trinity Hymnal have been removing overtly Arminian and otherwise non-Reformed hymns from this hymnal. It has gone through several revisions, each shorter than the one previous to it. Finally the United Reformed Churches and the OPC have created this psalter-hymnal, still with many more hymns than in the BoP. We look for expansion of our music selection while they have gone through editions of contraction. It is ironic. . . Ultimately, we fear the loss of Psalm singing....’

- 2.5.2 The Chilliwack CanRC reminds that GS 2004 limited the number of hymns to 100. The TPH far exceeds this limit. Adopting this overture would bypass a ‘long standing and accepted process by the churches for approving Psalms and Hymns for use in the worship services.’ ‘The overture from Aldergrove does not interact with any of the previous Synod decisions regarding this process or why we have a common Book of Praise that is to be used by all of the Canadian Reformed Churches.’ Chilliwack disagrees that discontentment among the members is sufficient grounds for support of the overture as this is a subjective observation. Chilliwack disagrees with the grounds that suggest adopting the TPH will nurture church unity. They suggest that the opposite is true, as some churches will decide to use the TPH, while others will decide to continue using the BoP, this will cause unrest within the churches. Then they ask the question: ‘Should we be pursuing further unity with sister churches at the expense of unity within our own federation?’ ‘The proposal states as grounds that people find joy in singing hymns and spiritual songs which are not currently found in our Book of Praise. Chilliwack questions whether a decision should be made based on people’s feelings? Can we modify anything in our worship services simply because people find joy in it?’ ‘The proposal states as grounds that changes to the Book of Praise happen at a glacial pace and that this causes frustration. Once again, these grounds are merely subjective. Chilliwack appreciates the careful and methodical approach taken by the SCBP and past synods when making changes to the Book of Praise’ ‘Chilliwack questions whether we can simply adopt decisions of our sister churches because we have confidence in them’ Chilliwack believes that ‘using such a large Psalter Hymnal will cause a lack of familiarity with the songs, especially for the young children.’
- 2.5.3 The Lynden ARC (8.4.2 and 8.5.21) requests that GS 2019 ‘appoint a committee with the specific mandate to complete an in-depth review of’ the TPH, studying ‘the arguments of the churches that are both for and against’ and provide a report and recommendations for GS 2022. Lynden does not believe the overture ‘follows an orderly process for evaluating and adopting new music for use in the churches.’ Since GS 2016 mandated the SCBP to monitor the development and give a sense of the TPH, ‘the overture interferes with the process that has already been initiated for evaluation’ of the TPH. Lynden further draws attention to the report of the SCBP to GS 2019 in which, according to Lynden, the SCBP ‘expressed concerns that should be investigated further’. In the letter of Lynden to RSW, forwarded by RSW to GS 2019, Lynden draws attention to our ‘history of carefully regulating the ratio of hymns to Psalms in our songbook. It would be imprudent to abruptly break this precedent with the adoption of a whole new songbook.’

- 2.5.4 The Dunnville CanRC requests that GS 2019 proceed with caution and, referring to SCBP report 7.2, asks whether it would not be hasty to approve hymns that could be argued to have questionable theology or contain individualism and sentimentality. Dunnville urges GS 2019 to approve for public worship only material that has been analyzed and can be conclusively stated to be faithful to Scripture.
- 2.5.5 The Elora CanRC states that singing in the worship is a very important part of how we worship, and any changes made to the choice of songs in corporate worship must be done carefully. If there is a strong desire as federation to add the TPH, then we should take due diligence and review the TPH. We therefore recommend that synod form a committee to review the TPH and report their findings and recommendations to GS 2022.
- 2.5.6 The Fergus-North CanRC notes that GS 2016 mandated the SCBP ‘To monitor the development of a joint OPC-URCNA songbook and when possible to provide the churches with a sense of this new song book’s composition, quality, and theological accuracy.’ Any review, regardless of the committee responsible, should be given specific timelines. Adoption of the TPH could cement federation relationships dramatically. However this should not trump theological accuracy and a personal ownership of the material used in one’s service to our Lord. The Genevan tunes are not equal to Scripture and should not be treated as such. Frustration with tunes is a reality in our churches, the same feelings would or could be voiced about the TPH. To rush into an approval of an alternative collection of songs based on the acceptance of our sister churches seems irresponsible. Adopting the TPH would mean immediate introduction of hundreds of versifications of the psalms and over 400 hymns. The path forward should include a full review by a committee separate from the SCBP.
- 2.5.7 The Guelph-Living Word CanRC has a two-fold concern regarding the RSW recommendation: it seems rushed and does not allow the local churches to make an informed decision and does not give enough time to consider the implications this kind of change has for our federative unity as well as for our schools. Guelph states that we need to be on guard to the onslaught of the world and the devil and do well to consider things that may, in fact, promote disunity and fragmentation within our federation. Guelph asks GS 2019 to make sure that we consider carefully the impact a decision would have on our local congregation as well as the bond of fellowship we enjoy within our federation.
- 2.5.8 The Ottawa-Jubilee CanRC expresses support for the RSW overture to approve, in addition to the adopted BoP, the TPH for use in public worship. They note that GS 1958 appointed deputies to prepare an English psalter together with appropriate hymns, using the CRC Psalter Hymnal, and possibly other Psalters. (Acts 1958, Art. 172 1.). The GS 1962 mandate states that deputies do not have to confine themselves to Mr. Dewey Westra’s Psalms or to the Genevan tunes. (Acts 1962 Art.21 p.26). GS 1965 authorized the use of other melodies and authorized that by way of exception two different rhymes of the same Psalm (one on a Genevan tune, one on a different tune). GS 1968 mandates include - To give preference to the Genevan tunes as melodies for the rhymed Psalms, with the understanding: 1. That

identical tunes for different Psalms be avoided as much as possible. 2 that those tunes which are hard to sing be replaced by other melodies of . . . priceless of value (Acts 1968 English 88. Pg 30). A godly desire to sing a broader variety Christian hymns in the worship services is found in our local church. GS 2001 mandated the SCBP to increase the hymnary to include up to 100 hymns. 18 years later we have increased the selection by 19 hymns and are still 15 short of a hundred. Suggested is ‘please bring us back to the original vision of our churches, strengthen our federation and don’t harness us to a SCBP process that is not working’.

- 2.5.9 The Carman-West CanRC is of the opinion that allowing the use of the TPH as a whole would add too many psalms and hymns for use in our churches. Allowing this could come at the expense of our psalms, which we believe should be avoided. Additional hymns could be added to our present BOP and some possibly removed to allow for a more varied selection of better-known songs, but that total number should be restricted. It is in the best interest of the churches that either the SCBP or another appointed committee should work on adding to the hymn section in our BoP. Attention should especially be paid to the songs presently in the TPH, particularly on those known in the broader Christian community. Carman-West states that we should maintain a common song book to be used within our federation.
- 2.5.10 The Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC supports the decision of RSW for the reasons stated in the overtures from RSW 2018 as well as for the reasons stated in their own decision of April 16, 2018 (which Ebenezer appended) and in the letter which Ebenezer sent to the SCBP (also appended to Ebenezer’s letter to GS 2019). Among others, the following can be gleaned from Ebenezer’s writings: Ebenezer expresses confidence in the work of the OPC and URCNA and that since they are our sister churches, the ‘prevailing assumption must be that the songs [of the TPH] are acceptable for use in the worship service and theologically accurate.’ Ebenezer notes that the conviction that the singing of psalms should have priority in the worship service ‘is given expression, not in the composition of the psalter hymnal, but in the choosing of songs by the local minister and consistory.’ Ebenezer also writes: ‘The TPH has a larger selection of tunes, and many of them are more familiar and easier to sing and would contribute to an increase in the use of psalms in the worship service.’
- 2.5.11 The Ancaster CanRC does not support the overture: Immediate adoption of the overture would go against our practice of careful review by the churches and bypasses the mandate given to the SCBP. Ancaster draws attention to the cautions about the TPH included in the report from the SCBP to GS 2019. Ancaster recommends denying the overture, appoint a separate committee to give a thorough examination of the TPH, and that committee would report its finding to the churches in a timely way before GS 2022.
- 2.5.12 The Barrhead CanRC believes that ‘it is premature to give approval to the TPH prior to undertaking a comprehensive review which provides the churches with a good sense of the TPH.’ Barrhead does express ‘support for a thorough investigation’ of the TPH and advises to appoint a new committee which should ‘take into account the cursory review made by the SCBP’ while correlating and

collaborating with the SCBP. Barrhead does express reservation about GS 2019 granting the request of the SCBP that the SCBP not be involved in a review of the TPH.

- 2.5.13 The Hamilton-Cornerstone CanRC suggests that instead of simply adopting the TPH it would be better to address the topic of adding more well-known hymns and psalms with alternate and well-known melodies by preparing an augment by the fall of 2020 for use in the worship services of the churches for a period of testing. Hamilton-Cornerstone observes that the URCNA and OPC have only recently adopted the TPH to meet their specific needs, that we have different needs than they do because we already have a songbook with updated language in the psalm section, and so we are able to instruct the SCBP to add to the *Book of Praise* those hymns and psalms of alternate melodies which our churches specifically request.
- 2.5.14 The Grand Rapids ARC does not support the overture at this time because they believe that it is necessary to act more slowly and cautiously, to mandate the SCBP to give a full evaluation of the TPH, and to give the churches an opportunity to see and evaluate the TPH. Grand Rapids argues that the reasons for denying a similar overture by RSE 2017 remain valid. They further point out that the federation is responsible to evaluate its own songbook. Since the URCNA and OPC do not have the equivalent of our Article 55 CO, it is necessary to wait longer before we can see how widely accepted and used it is within those federations. Since dissatisfaction with the BoP is the motivation for adopting the TPH, it could cause the hasty demise of modal Genevan tunes that have been in use in the churches for many centuries.
- 2.5.15 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC supports the overture in all its parts but does not agree that it is necessary for the churches to interact with the TPH as happened in the past with the introduction of the Augment. They observe that after reviewing the TPH the SCBP ‘did not recommend not adding the TPH’. Toronto states that the TPH does not need review by the CanRC because the review has already done by the OPC and URCNA and trusting their work shows and promotes unity. Toronto favors that the overture allows for flexibility concerning how the local churches decide to use the TPH. Many of the songs found in the TPH are already used at combined CanRC and URCNA events as well as weddings and funerals. All the churches in the federation are presently dealing with requests concerning the use of the TPH. A limited selection of songs for worship has led some congregations to replace the worship services on Christmas and Good Friday with a program to justify the use of songs outside the *Book of Praise*. The churches and synods must recognize and accept that although a matter may be considered as a matter for consideration by the churches in common, upon deliberation and consideration, it is possible that once decided by the churches when gathering in synods, uniform policy and practice do not necessarily follow if not mandated by Scripture or confession. Fear of singing different songs in different local congregations should not be a factor. GS 2016 (Article 87, Consideration 4.8) is cited; that ‘Church Order Article 30 does not say that a matter for the churches in common is one in which uniformity of practice is demanded’.

- 2.5.16 The Calgary CanRC recommends to not adopt the TPH. Calgary expresses concern that the overture does not address that GS 2004 limited the number of hymns to 100, which decision sought to maintain the centrality of Psalm singing in the churches. Calgary points out that the cursory evaluation of the SCBP ‘found that some of the hymns [of the TPH] did not meet the criteria previously established by the churches.’ Calgary expects that the promotion of the TPH in fostering unity with sister churches ‘would be at the expense of unity within our own federation as some congregations choose to use the TPH and some do not.’
- 2.5.17 The Grassie-Covenant CanRC is concerned about ‘unintended consequences’ of the overture. Grassie-Covenant states: ‘this overture side steps any due procedure for approving songs for use in the worship service’; ‘care should be taken to evaluate this publication’; ‘the current process ... is inadequate for this kind of proposal’. Grassie-Covenant agrees with the SCBP that if GS 2019 would like a more in-depth evaluation of the TPH, ‘such a review be done by another committee’ which would be an *ad hoc* committee; this would prevent the SCBP from receiving conflicting mandates. ‘We would ask Synod to consider this overture carefully and perhaps conduct a thorough evaluation of the TPH.’
- 2.5.18 The Burlington-Fellowship CanRC recommends (‘we strongly encourage’) that GS 2019 adopt the overture. Adopting use of the TPH ‘is an affirmative expression’ of unity with the URCNA and ‘it is unreasonable for the CanRC to assume that any federative unity with the URCNA will not also include the use of the TPH in combined federation.’ Burlington-Fellowship highlights the North American context, including the early history and synod decisions (1958, 1962, 1965, 1968) of the CanRC, when the CanRC sought to create an ‘English Psalter (not exclusively Genevan) with an English Hymnary.’ Burlington-Fellowship draws attention to what the Denver-Emmanuel ARC writes in its initial proposal to CM about its particular context of contact with sister churches in which the TPH would have a beneficial function in public worship. And Burlington-Fellowship (with Denver-Emmanuel) sees that the use of the TPH would support the work of mission in the North American context.
- 2.5.19 The Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC notes in relation to RSW’s overture that we have specifically decided that we will limit the number of hymns in the BoP to 100, it becomes a moot point whether those hymns are between the covers of the BoP or the covers of the TPH as they would all be ‘in the pew’ and available for singing. The TPH and BoP total of hymns would be 480 which is almost 5x beyond the limit that we’ve agreed upon as churches. The URC has taken a breather on all unity discussions with CanRC for the foreseeable future, therefore the argument of RSW item 6.3 regarding possible unity, loses much of its force. Another argument from RSW deals with ‘mission churches’ standing to benefit from adopting the TPH, that argument is brief and somewhat vague. Much of church life, including the songs, will involve a big learning curve for new believers. Drawing lines of distinction between so called missional congregations and regular congregations and then potentially under-lining such a distinction with different congregations emphasizing different song books is fraught with the potential to fray the unity of our federation. Regarding ‘singability’ of the Genevan

tunes remember that they were specifically composed to be sung by people who were not used to singing in corporate worship. We still have room to add fifteen more hymns such as ‘Abide with me’ [allusions to Ps 27,102 and 1Cor 15] suitable for worship and may well be helpful for newcomers because they are more widely known. Maintaining unity in our worship services ought to be a high priority. Note that RSE 2017 decided on the same topic in the opposite direction. We have the potential for disunity, something that no one wants. For accompanists the thought of being prepared to play well from a song collection of almost 900 tunes could be overwhelming to some, especially in congregations that only have one or two accompanists. It would be unwise for GS 2019 to decide to allow congregations to put the TPH in their pews beside the BoP, even for ‘testing purposes’. The SCBP could put together a booklet of 10-15 additional hymns for testing in the churches with a view to possible eventual inclusion in the BoP. GS decisions should be seen to uphold the valuable and long-standing relationship we have as federation with the SCBP.

- 2.5.20 The Orangeville CanRC does not support the overture at this time because the overture asks GS 2019 to approve the TPH sight unseen and skips the step of provisionally approving the TPH for testing in the churches, it is not a valid argument to equate trusting sister churches with adopting all their documents as our own; it is a subjective statement to conclude that adding the TPH to the BoP will enhance the unity in worship between us as sister churches in North America. The conclusions concerning the minimal value of the SCBP are subjective as indicated by the use of the words ‘perceived’ and ‘debatable’ in the overture; it is not a strong argument to adopt the TPH because many people want this and are already doing it, since we don’t know how many people really want it, in what settings they are using the songs, the Word of God is standard not the number of people involved, the TPH is not known to be the solution; it has not been shown that the songs of the TPH will meet the needs of those who are new to the faith or those who come to us from other reformed church backgrounds. To suggest that the TPH will address the difficulty some experience in learning to sing and love the Genevan melodies is not only subjective, but also an argument for abandoning the BoP and choosing only the songs that are in the TPH; wealth of choice will impoverish familiarity; the prominence of the psalms in worship will be put under pressure by the presence of 425 hymns. Therefore Orangeville recommends that GS 2019 does not adopt the overture and that if a committee be appointed to do a review of the TPH, such a committee should take note of the work of the SCBP leading up to the Synod Smithers 2007, when they reviewed more than 500 hymns as well as their preliminary evaluation of the TPH.
- 2.5.21 The Neerlandia-(North) CanRC bring their concerns regarding the possible adoption of the TPH. They note that GS 2004 limited the number of Hymns for use in our worship services to 100 - this decision still stands. It becomes apparent that the URC and OPC were working together to come up with a psalm book that would foster unity among the congregations of their federations. They were moving away from using the CRC psalter hymnal - we as CanRC have already accomplished that in the Genevan Psalter - so why move towards losing something

that can identify us and set us apart. To gain a broader form of unity the URC and OPC didn't adopt our BoP - therefore why do we think adopting the TPH will increase unity? A number of hymns that didn't make it from our latest August into the BoP are included in the TPH. What is gained when as a federation we take steps to make ourselves more attractive to others but alienate and neglect those within our own midst who still struggle with the last addition to our BoP and struggle with the idea of another hymn book? Remember the words of Romans 14:15 '....do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.'

- 2.5.22 The Fergus-Maranatha CanRC requests that GS 2019 seriously consider not approving the overtures to adopt the TPH for use in our churches and asks that the following be considered: The argument that this is a topic that lives in our churches is very subjective. How can that be verified? They ask that GS 2019 not make decisions regarding such an important overture based on subjective arguments. GS 2016 mandated the SCBP to monitor development of the joint URCNA and OPC songbook - the RSW overture clearly ignores and seeks to avoid this mandate. GS 2004 (Art.115 Rec. 6.1.1). capped the number of hymns to be included in the BoP at 100. The RSW 2018 overture is attempting to circumvent the spirit of the mandate given by GS 2004. We must assume that the decision of GS 2004 capped the number of Hymns at 100. Adopting the TPH would mean introducing more than 400 hymns putting aside our adopted practice of carefully choosing hymns via the diligent scrutiny of the SCBP. To suddenly rush forward with adopting a new collection of hymns without doing our own due diligence is both unwarranted and perhaps even irresponsible. They do not agree with approving the TPH for use in our churches.
- 2.5.23 The St. Albert CanRC agrees that there is great value in maintaining the principles of a federative approach to corporate worship – it is good to have consistency throughout the federation – and that the SCBP may not be an appropriate forum to evaluate the TPH. It seems that to adopt a new Psalter-Hymnal without the same rigour – as has been put forward by the SCBP – which has been exemplary – would be a mis-step for the federation. GS could strike a committee to evaluate the TPH. It would be best for GS not to adopt the recommendation of RSW but instead strike a review committee to evaluate and bring a recommendation to a future GS.
- 2.5.24 The Edmonton-Immanuel CanRC has not examined the content of the TPH but addresses the question of adoption of the TPH asking GS 2019 to consider the following points: TPH is a publication of the URCNA and OPC not including the CanRC, TPH has only recently been published in 2018 and is not well known among members of the CanRC, TPH has not been formally reviewed by the SCBP, Adoption of the TPH would at this time be premature - there has been no period of testing. RSE and RSW have come to different conclusions regarding the adoption of the TPH therefore there is a lack of consensus in the federation. GS should also consider what impact the adoption of the TPH may have when used in conjunction with the BoP in public worship. They recommend GS 2019 not to adopt the TPH for use in the Can/Am Ref Churches. And to task the SCBP or a new committee to undertake a thorough review of the TPH and report back to the next GS.

- 2.6 The Standing Committee of the Book of Praise (SCBP) received the following mandate from GS 2016 (Art. 127 Rec. 5.6.6): ‘to monitor the development of an joint OPC/URCNA songbook and when possible to provide the churches with a sense of this new song book’s composition, quality, and theological accuracy’. In the report to GS 2019 the SCBP gives a review of the TPH:

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 16th 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 9th 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 = Augment #16).
- 2.6.4 The SCBP comes with the following conclusions:

- [7.4.2.1] With this report completed, the Committee requests Synod to declare that we have fulfilled our mandate as it regards the Trinity Psalter Hymnal.
- [7.2.4.2] 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.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The RSW 2018 overture, along with many individual churches, express the desire to have more Psalm renditions and additional Hymns available to the churches for use in public worship services. It is apparent that this is a topic that lives in the churches and that the churches want to act in harmony with one another (cf. Romans 15:5-6; Ephesians 4:1-6; CO Art. 55).
- 3.2 The principles governing the decisions of the earliest synods of the churches (Synod 1958, 1962, 1965, 1968), which envisioned the possibility of including Psalms with non-Genevan melodies in the songbook, can guide us today as we address the needs of an increasing number of members and visitors who are not familiar with the existing BoP and Genevan tunes. There are many Psalm renditions and Hymns in the broader reformed ecclesiastical context of North America that suit the diverse desires/needs of the different churches within our federation, and their use can give expression to the unity that exists between the CanRC and her sister churches.
- 3.3 Simple adoption of the TPH as the original overtures of CPE and CM request, would seem to be a quick way to satisfy the desire for more Psalm renditions and a greater variety of hymns. However, the decision of GS 2004 to cap the number of hymns to 100 on the ground that Psalms should have the predominant place in the liturgy of the Reformed churches, at this time limits the churches from adding the abundance of hymns that the TPH includes.
- 3.4 Further, in the mandates, guidelines and principles given to the SCBP over the years and letters to GS 2019, the churches have shown the desire for careful study of the songs adopted for the worship services. The good work of the URCNA/OPC in the TPH is not questioned when we take time to investigate the value of the TPH content for the particular needs of the CanRC at this time.
- 3.5 Since the TPH has only recently been published and the contents and melodies are largely unknown among the churches, it is necessary to give the churches an opportunity to interact meaningfully with its content in order to appreciate the quality of the TPH. (as per RSW 2018 Art. 19 Cons. 2.1.7) The results of the cursory review of the TPH (cf. report of the SCBP to GS 2019) indicate that the TPH should be given further scrutiny before a final decision is made regarding its suitability for use in the churches.
- 3.6 A number of churches are concerned about subjective influences in the matter of musical preferences. It is good to remember that even when there are clear principles and guidelines in place to pick the best songs, it is inevitable that subjective argument, opinion, and preference enter the decision-making process.
- 3.7 Some churches are of the opinion that the overture bypasses an existing process, namely, that GS 2016 already mandated the SCBP to look at the TPH and report its

findings to GS 2019. It is clear that the mandate for the SCBP was not intended to be a thorough review. Further, it is not necessary to conclude that since the SCBP received a TPH mandate, that the churches could not at the same time express their opinion by way of an overture to GS. The one path does not necessarily exclude the other.

- 3.8 In light of the above, GS 2019 should not grant the specific request to approve the Psalms and hymns of the TPH for immediate use in the churches. However, GS 2019 does acknowledge the intent of the overture to add more Psalm renditions and a greater variety of Hymns for use in the worship services. To get to the goal of an enhanced and expanded selection of songs for the churches, GS 2019 recognizes the desire of many of the churches (cf. letters) who wish the process of selection to include diligent review by way of committee.
- 3.9 The SCBP requests GS 2019 that it not be mandated to further review the TPH. However, the SCBP is the authorized body for the enhancement and expansion of the BoP. Having heard the request of the SCBP and the sentiments of the churches, GS 2019 should appoint the SCBP with a clear mandate and an increased number of members for this project.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide to

- 4.1 Receive the overture submitted by RSW 2018;
- 4.2 Mandate the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* (SCBP):
- 4.2.1 Concerning the Psalms:
- 4.2.1.1 to seek input from the churches as to which non-Genevan renditions of the Psalms could be added to enhance the Psalm section of the BoP;
- 4.2.1.2 to compile a list of suitable additional Psalm renditions for possible inclusion in the *Book of Praise*, using the TPH as a primary resource;
- 4.2.2 Concerning the Hymns:
- 4.2.2.1 to seek input from the churches concerning replaceable and additional hymns for the 2014 *Book of Praise*, using the TPH as a primary resource;
- 4.2.2.2 to compile a list of such hymns keeping in mind that at this time the final number of hymns in the *Book of Praise* should not exceed 100 (as per GS 2004), and being flexible with the structural template (Apostle's Creed) of the hymn-section of the 2014 *Book of Praise*;
- 4.2.3 To send, at least 18 months before the next general synod, an explanatory report to the churches together with a provisional list of songs for immediate testing, in the worship services if so desired, so there can be well-considered feedback to the next general synod;
- 4.2.4 To receive feedback from the churches on the Committee's interim report and include its evaluation of that feedback along with actionable recommendations in its report 6 months before the next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 143 – Appeals of churches re: RSE 2017 Art. 17 (*Trinity Psalter-Hymnal*)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Appeal to GS 2019 from the Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC (8.6.3.1)
- 1.2 Appeal to GS 2019 from the Flamborough-Redemption CanRC (8.6.3.2)
- 1.3 Appeal to GS 2019 from the Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC (8.6.3.3)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The churches of Burlington-Rehoboth, Flamborough-Redemption and Burlington-Ebenezer request GS 2019 to judge that ‘Regional Synod East Nov 2017 erred in its decision to deny the overture and these churches request GS 2019 to allow the churches the freedom to immediately use the TPH in the worship services. Burlington-Ebenezer believes it was wronged by the decision of RSE 2017.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The request of the churches of Burlington-Rehoboth, Flamborough-Redemption and Burlington-Ebenezer to allow the churches the freedom to immediately use the TPH in the worship services is answered in Article 142 where GS 2019 dealt with an overture from RSW 2018 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.

4. Recommendation:

That the consideration above serves as an answer to the appeal/request of the Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC, the Flamborough-Redemption CanRC, and the Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC.

ADOPTED**Article 144 – Appeal of Tintern Spring Creek re: GS 2016 Art. 103 (Confidentiality)****1. Material**

- 1.1 Appeal to GS 2019 from church of Tintern Spring Creek re: the confidentiality of GS 2016 Art. 103 (8.6.12.1)

2. Admissibility

- 2.1 Since the matter concerns an appeal of a decision of GS 2016 it is admissible.

3. Observations

- 3.1 GS 2016 declared Article 103 of the Acts “confidential” and hence did not make it available to all church members but only to consistories. No grounds were provided.
- 3.2 The Tintern Spring Creek CanRC appeals this decision on the following grounds:
 - 3.2.1 GS 2016 did not provide grounds for declaring this Act confidential;
 - 3.2.2 Past synods have regularly published similar or sensitive decisions;
 - 3.2.3 Though the matter involved a discipline case, the behavior or beliefs triggering the discipline were in the public domain. Keeping Synod’s judgments confidential on that behavior and/or beliefs does not assist elders in guiding the thinking and/or behavior of church members;
 - 3.2.4 Publicly promulgated errors should be met with publicly pronounced judgments.

4. Considerations

- 4.1 When General Synod makes decisions on matters involving sensitive personal information that has never been made public and which, in view of the 9th commandment, ought not to be made public, these decisions are to be put into the confidential acts.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide:

- 5.1 To deny the appeal and thus the request to as yet publish GS 2016 Art. 103 as an appendix to the Acts of GS 2019.

ADOPTED

Article 145 – SCBP (Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) (8.2.5.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Willoughby Heights (8.3.7.1), Smithville (8.3.7.2), Lincoln-Vineyard (8.3.7.3), Carman-West (8.3.7.4), Ancaster (8.3.7.5), Fergus-Maranatha (8.3.7.6), Aldergrove (8.3.7.7) and Winnipeg-Grace (8.3.7.8).

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 mandated the SCBP:
 - [5.6.1] To foster an increased awareness of the *Book of Praise*, among others in the English-speaking world;
 - [5.6.2] To maintain contact with our Australian sister-churches to assist them in the possible publication of their own *Book of Praise*;
 - [5.6.3] To maintain its corporate status in order to protect the interest of the Canadian Reformed Churches in matters concerning the *Book of Praise*;
 - [5.6.4] To communicate with the churches regarding copyright issues concerning the *Book of Praise*;
 - [5.6.5] To maintain its archives and website;
 - [5.6.6] To monitor the development of a joint OPC-URCNA songbook and when possible to provide the churches with a sense of this new song book's composition, quality, and theological accuracy;
 - [5.6.7] To receive, scrutinize and evaluate the contents of correspondence from the churches and to report to the next General Synod as to the validity of the suggestions made (as per GS 2016 Art. 122);
 - [5.6.8] To seek, receive, evaluate and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section to be compiled for possible submission to a future Synod (as per GS 2016 Art. 122).
- 2.2 The SCBP has reinstated the wording of the Subscription Form in the third printing of the *Book of Praise* (Gs 2016 Art. 54 Rec. 4.3).

- 2.3 The SCBP has continued to respond to requests for information regarding the *Book of Praise* and notes there remains considerable interest at home and abroad. It requests GS 2019 to continue the Committee's mandate to foster an increased awareness of the existence of the *Book of Praise* in the English-speaking world.
- 2.4 The SCBP provided support to the Deputies of the Free Reformed Church of Australia (FRCA) including providing permission related to use and alteration of the *Book of Praise* as used in the FRCA. The SCBP notes that the FRCA Synod Bunbury 2018 has appointed a committee to develop an Australian version of the *Book of Praise*.
- 2.5 The SCBP has maintained its status as a corporation and requests GS 2019 to mandate it to maintain its corporate status for the purpose of protecting the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches relating to the *Book of Praise*.
- 2.6 The SCBP has communicated with the churches in May 2017 and provided support to individual churches in matters relating to copyright, particularly around projection and live streaming.
- 2.7 Rev. C. Bosch has been the archivist for the SCBP for many years and has asked to be relieved of this task. The SCBP requests that Rev. Bosch be formally thanked for his work on behalf of the SCBP. Dr. J. Smith has been found willing to take over this task. In addition, the SCBP has decided to implement triennial inspections of the archives in the September/October prior to a General Synod, and sr. Margaret Alkema has agreed to assist in these inspections. The first inspection report will be provided to Synod 2022.
- 2.8 The SCBP continues to maintain its website (www.bookofpraise.ca) as part of its efforts for the promotion and awareness for the *Book of Praise*.
- 2.9 The SCBP monitored developments regarding the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (TPH), a joint project of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). The TPH committee requested and was granted the use of a number of psalms and hymns from the *Book of Praise*, subject to some limitations. The SCBP conducted a "cursory study" of the TPH, reviewing all of the Psalms and a sampling of about 80 hymns. It provided some feedback [see Committee report 7.2] and requests Synod to declare that it has fulfilled its mandate as given by GS 2016 in Recommendation 5.6.6. It also requests that if Synod would like a more in-depth evaluation, that such evaluation not be done by the SCBP because of the "tension between such a mandate and our existing mandate to maintain and promote the *Book of Praise*."
- 2.10 In May 2018, the SCBP sent a letter to the churches inviting them to submit hymns for consideration to be included in a future edition of the *Book of Praise*. A number of letters were received but the Committee did not have any recommendations to make to GS 2019. It requests GS 2019 to mandate the Committee to "seek, receive, evaluate and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section to be compiled for possible submission to a future Synod." The SCBP has also received, and is evaluating, correspondence it received relating to Hymn 1.
- 2.11 Since GS 2016, a third printing of the *Book of Praise* was authorized. The SCBP maintains a list of corrigenda for inclusion in the next print run.
- 2.12 In executing the mandate received from GS 2016 to negotiate a contract renewal with Premier Printing with an expiry date of February 28, 2022, 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 on-line.” To address this tension, the SCBP requests that it be authorized to negotiate a new contract with Premier Printing that moves the cost of layout and publishing from Premier Printing to the churches. The SCBP would need to be authorized to make use of funds from the General Fund to cover layout and publication costs when such work is required.

- 2.13 Br. A. den Hollander has completed his term at the end of GS 2019. The SCBP recommends that GS 2019 formally thank br. den Hollander for his work as a member of the Committee. The SCBP recommends that its membership continue to be set at 4 members and proposes that a member be appointed to replace br. den Hollander.
- 2.14 The SCBP proposes to replace the word ‘expiation’ in the first sentence of Belgic Confession, Article 34 to ‘propitiation’. The Committee provides a historical and exegetical basis for going back to this wording, which existed in the work leading up to the 1984 *Book of Praise*.
- 2.15 The SCBP expresses gratitude for the contribution provided by Dr. W. Helder, Rev. G. Ph. Van Popta, Dr. J. Van Vliet, Rev. C. Bosch and sr. M. Alkema.
- 2.16 Submissions were received from the following churches:
 - 2.16.1 Lincoln-Vineyard CanRC would like to see the *Book of Praise* content published online, where possible within the copyrights. It argues that this will serve our federation by providing members with free, digital access to the psalms and hymns. It also creates opportunities to share our psalms and hymns to a broader audience.
 - 2.16.2 Aldergrove CanRC recommends that GS 2019 instruct the SCBP to include a four-part harmony in future printings of the *Book of Praise*. This would promote the *Book of Praise* and the playing and singing of the psalms and hymns within the homes of church members.
 - 2.16.3 Willoughby Heights CanRC alerts synod to the need to be consistent in how committees draw on the General Fund. GS 2019 should ensure that the General Fund has sufficient liquidity and that annual assessments are fairly consistent. It suggests synod seek clarification from the SCBP regarding the costs their proposal could involve, and the General Fund as to how these costs would be met.
 - 2.16.4 Smithville CanRC recommends that GS 2019 conduct a more in-depth evaluation of the TPH and, as suggested by the SCBP, appoint a new committee to take on this task and report to the next Synod.
 - 2.16.5 Fergus-Maranatha CanRC requests that GS 2019 remove the word “seek” from the SCBP mandate “to seek, receive, evaluate, and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section.” It makes this request to ensure that it remains the responsibility of the local churches to initiate further development of our *Book of Praise*. In support of its request Fergus Maranatha asks that GS 2019 consider the following:
 - Historically, seeking new hymns was the task of the churches, not of the SCBP. Churches sent suggestions for additional hymns directly to the committee with “reasons for their suitability” (Acts of GS 2001, Art. 97. Recommendation 5.2p. 111).

- General Synods 2007 & 2013 continued to make the addition of new hymns to the *Book of Praise* the responsibility of the individual churches.
 - GS 2016 added the word “seek” to the mandate of the SCBP without any explanation.
- 2.16.6 Ancaster CanRC brings to the attention of GS 2019 the following:
- Its support for an in-depth study of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (TPH) with a view to adopting additional Psalms and Hymns for use in the Canadian Reformed Churches, since this would be in line with the way the federation has always approached changes to the songs we sing.
 - Its agreement with the change to Belgic Confession Article 34.
 - Its appreciation for the work of the Committee and its thankfulness for the contributions of the retiring members.
- 2.16.7 Carman West CanRC is of the opinion that it would be good to conduct a survey among the churches to find out how often each of the hymns is used on average in a given year. The purpose of this survey would be to delete those hymns that are seldom used to make room for better selections. This would help alleviate the concerns some have that a substantial increase in the number of hymns could come at the cost of Psalm singing, which should continue to be treasured.
- 2.16.8 Carman West requests GS 2019 to instruct the SCBP to give special (although not exclusive) consideration to the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, when replacing or adding hymns to the *Book of Praise*.
- 2.16.9 Winnipeg-Grace CanRC proposes the Apostles’ Creed (in the section of Ecumenical Creeds as well as the entry in the Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 7 Q & A 23) be changed to read “He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand” and that Hymn 1 be revised accordingly.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 GS 2019 acknowledges with thankfulness the work the SCBP in executing the mandate it received from GS 2016.
- 3.2 GS 2019 gratefully acknowledges the work of br. A. den Hollander during his term on this Committee.
- 3.3 Fergus-Maranatha interacts with the Committee’s mandate from GS 2016 (Art 122, Rec. 5.6.8) which included the word “seek”. Fergus-Maranatha incorrectly argues that historically it was up to the churches to make recommendations, that the addition of the word “seek” was added by GS 2016 without any explanation, and that GS 2013 and 2007 continued to make the responsibility of addition new hymns to the *Book of Praise* the responsibility of the individual churches. GS 2019 notes that the word “seek” was included in GS 2010 Art. 142, Recommendation 4.1. As a result of appeals, GS 2016 (Art 122) rescinded the decision of GS 2013 thereby returning to the text of the decision of GS 2010.
- 3.4 GS 2019 endorses the request of Carman-West that the SCBP give special consideration to the TPH when replacing or adding hymns to the *Book of Praise*. Carman-West also recommends that the SCBP conduct a survey on the frequency of usage of each of the hymns with a view to deleting hymns that are not used very often. This recommendation does not adequately address the underlying reasons why some hymns might not be sung

as often as others (e.g. seasonal consideration), and therefore this recommendation is not practical.

- 3.5 The SCBP requests authorization to move the cost of layout and publishing from Premier Printing and use funds from the General Fund to cover these costs. Willoughby Heights cautions that GS 2019 should ensure that the General Fund has sufficient liquidity and that assessments are fairly consistent. The SCBP reports that of the 7,548 copies of the *Book of Praise* distributed since GS 2016, 3,072 (40.7%) were “international” sales. The SCBP does not provide information on how the removal of these costs from Premier Printing will affect the price of the *Book of Praise*, and if the transfer of such costs to the General Fund would inadvertently result in members of the CanRC subsidizing international sales. As the SCBP does not provide an estimate of the costs or how this would affect the General Fund, GS 2019 cannot authorize the SCBP to implement this proposal at this time.
- 3.6 Aldergrove recommends that the SCBP be instructed to include a four-part harmony in future printings. Aldergrove notes that GS 2013, in Article 186 Consideration 3.6, finds the implication of having a version of the *Book of Praise* in four-part harmony to be “too daunting to be practical.” Aldergrove correctly notes that GS 2016, Art 127, Observation 3.6 stated that the SCBP website includes a resource section containing links to recommended harmonization of all the psalms and hymns in a digital format free of charge. The SCBP should evaluate the possibility of creating a version of the *Book of Praise* containing the four-part harmonies provided by br. D. Teitsma when the matters addressed in Consideration 3.4 (i.e., to move the cost of layout and publishing from Premier Publishing to the General Fund) are addressed.
- 3.7 Lincoln-Vineyard would like the SCBP to publish content online as a means to serve members of the Canadian Reformed Churches and as a way to share the psalms and hymns with a broader audience. When the matters discussed in Consideration 3.4 are addressed, the SCBP should evaluate Lincoln-Vineyard’s recommendation.
- 3.8 The SCBP proposes, after consultation with two professors at the CRTS, to amend the first sentence of Belgic Confession Article 34 by removing the word “expiation” and replacing it with “propitiation”. GS 2019 concurs with the grounds articulated by the SCBP (Report 12.1.1 – 12.1.3).
- 3.9 The SCBP has completed “cursory study” of the TPH and requests that any further evaluation be completed by a committee other than the SCBP. The matter of further review of the TPH has been addressed in GS 2019 Art. 142.
- 3.10 Winnipeg-Grace’s proposal to amend the Apostles’ Creed (in the section of Ecumenical Creeds as well as the entry in the Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 7 Q & A 23) to read “He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand,” and that Hymn 1 be revised accordingly, is more than a linguistic change. This is evident from the fact that Winnipeg-Grace supports it using theological arguments. This letter should be given to the SCBP for its evaluation.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To express gratitude to:
 - 4.1.1 br. A. den Hollander for his work as member of the SCBP;

- 4.1.2 Rev. C. Bosch for his work as archivist of the SCBP;
- 4.1.3 Dr. W. Helder, Rev. G. Ph. Van Popta, Dr. J. Van Vliet, and sr. M. Alkema for their contribution to the SCBP.
- 4.2 To mandate the SCBP to:
 - 4.2.1 Foster an increased awareness of the existence of the *Book of Praise* in the English-speaking world;
 - 4.2.2 Maintain contact with the FRCA relating to matters of the *Book of Praise* and the development of an Australian *Book of Praise*;
 - 4.2.3 Maintain its corporate status for the purpose of protecting the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in matters concerning the *Book of Praise*;
 - 4.2.4 Maintain the archives and website;
 - 4.2.5 Seek, receive, evaluate and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section to be compiled for possible submission to a future Synod (see also GS 2019 Art. 142 for further instruction);
 - 4.2.6 Serve Synod 2022 with a report regarding its proposal to move the costs of layout and publication, which will include a discussion of the financial implications to the General Fund. This should include an evaluation of the impact of creating an online version and a four-part harmony version (Considerations 3.5 and 3.6);
 - 4.2.7 Amend the first sentence of BC Article 34 by removing the word “expiation” and replacing it with “propitiation”;
 - 4.2.8 Review Winnipeg-Grace’s letter regarding the proposed change to the wording of the Apostles’ Creed and Hymn 1;
 - 4.2.9 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;
 - 4.2.10 Submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next Synod.
- 4.3 To authorize the SCBP to negotiate a temporary extension of the contract with Premier Printing Ltd past the current expiry date of February 28, 2022, in order to allow the Committee to complete the mandate in Recommendation 4.2.6.

ADOPTED

Article 146 – CWeb (Committee for the Official Website)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for the Official Website (CWeb) (8.2.10.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Burlington-Ebenezer (8.3.8.1), Barrhead (8.3.8.2), Toronto-Bethel (8.3.8.3), Grassie-Covenant (8.3.8.4), Burlington Waterdown-Rehoboth (8.3.8.5), Taber (8.3.8.6), London-Pilgrim (8.3.8.7), Orangeville (8.3.8.8)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 49) 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;

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- [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.
- 2.2 The committee members have kept in touch with each other through Slack, an online chat and collaboration system, and the committee also had seven online meetings using Skype to discuss and provide updates of projects and progress.
- 2.3 Brs. Jeremy Koopmans, Jonathan Reinink, and Darryl Shpak looked after the technical side of the website and email functions, while Rev. T. Roukema 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.
- 2.4 The terms of brs. Jonathan Reinink and Darryl Shpak are completed. Br. Reinink has indicated that he is willing to remain on the committee for a second term. The CWeb recommends sr. Christie Hoeksema, member of Attercliffe, to be appointed to the committee.
- 2.5 A significant part of the committee's work involved regular maintenance of the existing website and associated technical functions, as well as the revision of website content whenever necessary.
- 2.6 The CWeb reports that the canrc.org website receives significant traffic.
- 2.7 The CWeb continued to provide canrc.org email services to the ministers, with an assessment of the current service (see Observation 2.13).
- 2.8 The Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC and Guelph-Living Word CanRC are the last two churches that maintain their website on the canrc.org web servers.
- 2.9 Through the work of Rev. J. Chase, the CWeb completed the task of continued digitizing (scanning and OCRing) all past Synodical reports in searchable format, which are available on the federation website.
- 2.10 The CWeb was mandated to significantly improve the federation website, which, based on the committee's analysis, resulted in a complete rebuild of the website.
- 2.11 While the new website has many new features and capabilities, the newer platform does not provide web hosting services for individual church websites, email addresses for ministers and others, and a ministerial email list.
- 2.12 The CWeb communicated with the SCBP regarding hosting content of the *Book of Praise*. The SCBP advised the CWeb to include the prose section only on the website and indicated that they work further with the copyright holders of the Psalms and Hymns.

- 2.13 The committee has historically offered email services to the churches, although the current implementation has not been satisfactory to most ministers. Over the years, the CWeb has noticed a decline in the usage of canrc.org email, and currently, very few ministers use canrc.org email accounts in favour of other email options such as Gmail or Hotmail as their ministerial email. Since the current implementation of email services is “old and simple”, the CWeb recommends “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.”
- 2.14 The CWeb offers three possible solutions, maintain the current email service, discontinue the service and encourage ministers to use their own personal email accounts, or move the email service to a more reliable and robust provider with a substantial increase in cost.
- 2.15 The committee recommends that, “if GS 2019 determines that the canrc.org email is beneficial and of importance to the churches”, to purchase G Suite Basic email service for the canrc.org email at a cost of \$10,300 CAD per year.
- 2.16 With the transition to a new hosting platform for the federation website, webhosting for individual churches will be phased out. With Synod’s approval, the two Guelph churches will be informed that the hosting of their websites will expire in the Fall 2020.
- 2.17 GS 2016 gave the CWeb a budget of \$10,000, of which \$5,800 was designated to implementing change to the federation website, and \$3,250 to the project of digitizing past synodical reports. Since the scope of the committee’s mandate to update the website exceeded the amount budgeted, the church appointed to administer the General Fund, Carman-East, granted an increased of \$3,000. These are one-time cost, which do not need to be repeated.
- 2.18 Ongoing expenses CWeb are for website hosting, which currently includes email services, and domain name registration. From 2019-2022, the projected cost is \$1,250 CAD per year.
- 2.19 Burlington-Ebenezer comments, should Synod accept the committee’s recommendation to implement G Suite, “this is a significant expense that is already under budgeted.” It suggests that Synod instruct the CWeb to propose a migration plan so that users of canrc.org will be inclined (or compelled) to use it, since most people do not like changing email services, even if it is change for the better.
- 2.20 Barrhead supports CWeb’s recommendation to implement G Suite since the email service has been “valuable for communicating and sharing information in a timely and efficient manner with colleagues and for soliciting/providing advice on pastoral matters.” Further, “opting for a different provider makes good sense, even fiscally, if it means that *all* CanRC ministers and missionaries can take part without undue hassle.”
- 2.21 Toronto-Bethel favours the approach “to discontinue and phase out email hosting as most ministers use their own email which works well.”
- 2.22 Grassie-Covenant is “not convinced that the benefit of providing a professional email service is worth \$25K [for three years] to the churches.” And, “the perceived advantage of an unchanging “canrc.org“ email extension only works within the confines of the Can. Ref. Churches. Any movement outside of Canada or to other federations ... would still require a change of address.” Grassie-Covenant disagrees with the proposed change of email services, and suggests that “email service be discontinued and phased out.” The

church requests that “CWeb be asked to advise ministers on alternative solutions for confidential group conversations.”

- 2.23 Burlington-Rehoboth suggests that “the amount set in the budget for paid email service is much too high” and suggests an alternate solution.
- 2.24 Taber feels that “regardless of how much money is invested in the email program, ministers will still be more comfortable using other encrypted email options that are available.” “It is not prudent to create a technologically advanced email system if it will not be adopted by a large percentage of users.”
- 2.25 London-Pilgrim comments concerning a “canrc.org” email service that allows for an email address that does not change and is professional, “we do not consider these benefits to be worth the expense for the G Suite Basic email service.” Since the church sees the ministerial email list as a valuable means of communication for ministers, they ask that the committee be tasked to look into “an alternate mailing list that would be economical for the churches.”
- 2.26 Orangeville indicates that it does not support CWeb’s recommendation to implement a robust and reliable email service because the services offered will not be “of practical benefit” to their minister, the canrc.org email address used by the clerk is auto-forwarded to a Gmail account, that “the committee has failed to demonstrate any additional benefit for G Suite Basic, other than a *perceived* ‘level of professionalism’”, and that “the cost of continuing to provide [an] ongoing email service, for a service that is not likely to be fully utilized ... is quite significant.”

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The CWeb has fulfilled its mandate, including:
 - 3.1.1 Digitizing all past Synodical reports in searchable format and making them available on the federation website;
 - 3.1.2 Implementing changes on the federation website “considered necessary and desirable”, resulting in a website that is fresh and modern;
- 3.2 While Barrhead supports the CWeb recommendation (Observation 2.15), Toronto-Bethel, Grassie-Covenant, Burlington-Rehoboth, Taber, London-Pilgrim, and Orangeville do not support the recommendation. Burlington-Ebenezer suggests a plan so that ministers will be inclined or compelled to use the new email service.
- 3.3 Based on the letters from the churches, GS 2019 does not support the recommendation to implement G Suite Basic.
- 3.4 Burlington-Rehoboth suggests an alternative solution which the committee has not investigated and would need time to evaluate.
- 3.5 Since the current email service is fading into extinction and moving the email service to a more reliable and robust provider at a significant additional cost is not acceptable, the remaining option is to discontinue the service and encourage ministers to use their own personal email accounts (compare with Observation 2.14).
- 3.6 Even if email hosting is discontinued, “canrc.org” email addresses can still be used as public-facing addresses by ministers and other church-related officers. These “canrc.org” email addresses can be set up to forward email to personal email accounts for incoming email. It should be noted, however, that the personal email address would be used as the origin for outgoing email.

- 3.7 The ministers appreciate the email list service which allows them to communicate with each other confidentially, to share information and concerns, and ask for advice from colleagues.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide that the CWeb has fulfilled its mandate, and:

- 4.1 To thank br. Darryl Shpak for his work on the committee;
- 4.2 To appoint two new members to the committee with six-year terms;
- 4.3 To thank the Rev. J. Chase for his work of digitizing all past Synodical reports;
- 4.4 To thank those involved in the development and implementation of the new federation website;
- 4.5 To request the SCBP to seek an arrangement with copyright holders which would allow the entire *Book of Praise* to be hosted on the official website;
- 4.6 To confirm that website hosting for the churches is no longer part of the CWeb's mandate;
- 4.7 To approve a budget of \$6,000 for the period 2019-2021 for ongoing operations;
- 4.8 To mandate the CWEB:
 - 4.8.1 To maintain the existing website and associated technical functions;
 - 4.8.2 To revise the content of the website whenever necessary, including:
 - 4.8.2.1 Posting news items and documents upon submission by ministers and clerks of church councils, and by officers of ecclesiastical assemblies who are authorized to post press releases or news items related to classes, regional or general synods.
 - 4.8.2.2 Annually auditing the site's information against the yearbook, and
 - 4.8.2.3 Maintaining pages for synodical committees with their current mandates and contact information;
 - 4.8.3 To make synod reports available on the web before the next synod;
 - 4.8.4 To discontinue and phase out email hosting;
 - 4.8.5 To provide email forwarding from "canrc.org" to personal email accounts for ministers, clerks, and others when requested by clerks of church Councils;
 - 4.8.6 To advise ministers on alternative email list services for confidential group discussions, and if an email list service is implemented for the ministers, to function as the administrator of the list;
 - 4.8.7 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;
 - 4.8.8 To submit a report on its activities to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 147 – GGRI-T (Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor)**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Reformed Churches in Indonesia-Timor (GGRI-T) (8.2.2.1)
- 1.2 Letter from the following church: Smithville (8.3.1.2)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) included in its report to GS 2019 that in a letter dd April 9, 2018, Smithville CanRC requested the CRCA to investigate the fledgling federation of churches newly formed on the island of Timor in Indonesia “with a view to establishing a sister church relation with them.” This new federation of nine churches is the fruit the Lord has granted on the labors of Smithville’s missionary, the Rev. E. Dethan. This new federation has called itself “Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Timor” (GGRI-T) because it intends to apply to the next Synod of the national GGRI to become part of that federation of churches.
- 2.2 Previous CanRC synods have indicated that requests for new relationships should come to the attention of the General Synod after having followed the ecclesiastical route (see GS 2007 Art. 160 Cons. 3.3; GS 2013 Art. 81 Cons. 3.1 & Rec. 4; GS 2013 Art. 175 Cons. 3.2).
- 2.3 In her letter to GS 2019, Smithville “formally requests GS 2019 to investigate the GGRI-T with a view to establishing ecclesiastical fellowship with them.” As grounds for the request Smithville reiterates what the CRCA has written to Synod: the GGRI-T “are in a sense daughters of the CanRC and receive direct assistance from some CanRC through mission work. It is appropriate for the CanRC to establish closer ties with the GGRI-Timor.”
- 2.4 The CanRC have had a relation of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the national GGRI since 2010.

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The request to “investigate” the GGRI-T with a view to establishing a sister church relation with them did not come to the attention of this GS via the ecclesiastical route.
- 3.2 As the GGRI-T is the fruit of mission work by Canadian Reformed Churches, we may be confident that our sister churches, the GGRI, will accept them (be it perhaps via a process) in an application to join their federation.
- 3.3 As the churches known today as the GGRI-T were forming and finding their way into a federation, they have been looking to the Smithville CanRC for a measure of guidance. Now that they are newly federated, they continue to look for encouragement and support from Smithville and those with whom Smithville belongs. The CRCA has experience and resources from which the GGRI-T could benefit.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To instruct the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 4.1.1 To provide assistance to the GGRI-T in its effort to join the GGRI;

- 4.1.2 In conjunction with Smithville to offer any other assistance within the normal ambit of CRCA work that the GGRI-T would need.
- 4.2 To send this decision to the Smithville CanRC as Synod's answer to their request.

ADOPTED

Article 148 – FRCNA (Free Reformed Churches in North America)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) regarding the Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA) (8.2.3.1).
- 1.2 Letters from the following churches: Lincoln -Vineyard (8.3.2.2), Attercliffe (8.3.2.6)

2. Observations

- 2.1 GS 2016 (Art. 49) gave a general mandate to the committee of the CCCNA:
 - [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.
- 2.2 The CanRC does not have EF with the FRCNA but is a member of NAPARC together with these churches.
- 2.3 The CanRC and FRCNA had official interaction at the federative level from 1998-2008. In response to certain concerns of the FRCNA, in 2007 the CanRC chose to cease pursuing discussions with the FRCNA until such a time as they requested resumption of contact. In 2008 there was a brief resumption but since that time there has been no contact until 2017.
 - 2.3.1 GS 1998 (Art. 98) decided to take up contact with the FRCNA and initiate fraternal dialogue with the FRCNA with a view towards establishing federative unity.
 - 2.3.2 GS 2001 (Art. 92) decided to acknowledge that the FRCNA has received the CanRC into a stage of "limited contact" according to the FRNCA unity guidelines at their recent Synod, and to continue dialogue with a view to promoting federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be on this path.
 - 2.3.3 GS 2004 (Art. 85) decided to continue meeting with a view to EF, while at the same time promoting and maintaining the desire for federative unity, and to discuss whatever obstacles there may be on this path.
 - 2.3.4 GS 2007 (Art. 105) decided to cease from pursuing discussions with the FRCNA. A letter from the FRCNA dated November 10, 2005, listed the following reasons for a reluctance to meet: 1) "the ongoing discussions and movement of the CanRC towards union with the URCNA" 2) "our meetings are too much top down."

- 2.3.4 GS 2010 (Art. 30) decided to utilize NAPARC to meet the FRCNA and to conclude regretfully at this time to have no formal ecclesiastical relations with the FRNCA.
- 2.4 There was an informal meeting at the ICRC 2017 between FRCNA delegates and CanRC delegates of the CRCA and CCCNA. The committee also held a meeting with the FRCNA at NARPAC 2017.
- 2.5 With our joint membership in both the ICRC and NAPARC, there was an opportunity to renew acquaintances with the FRCNA's external relations committee.
- 2.6 During the meeting on November 15, 2017, the following was discussed:
- a) The reasons for the pause in our relationships over the past decade.
 - b) The perception 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.
 - c) The mutual desire on the part of the respective committee members to resume contact and under the Lord's blessing to have a relationship between our two federations grow without the pressure of speaking about federative unity.
- 2.7 General Synod 2018 of the FRCNA decided to resume relationship with the CanRC at the FRCNA Level One correspondence. According to their rules, "Level 1 – Limited Contact" involves 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.*

3. Considerations

- 3.1 The committee has been diligent in completing their mandate.
- 3.2 Engaging in contact and dialogue with the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) is equivalent to FRCNA's Level One correspondence.
- 3.3 On the basis of the CCCNA report and the input from the churches, with gratitude to the Lord, it is right to accept the offer of a Level One relationship of the FRCNA.

4. Recommendations

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To accept the invitation of the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) to enter into their Level One correspondence;
- 4.2 To mandate the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA):

- 4.2.1 To keep the churches with which EF has already been established informed of our relationship with the FRCNA and consult with them concerning the FRCNA.
- 4.2.2 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of next general synod.

ADOPTED

Article 149 – CRCA & CCCNA (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad & Committee for Contact with Churches in North America)

1. Material

- 1.1 Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) (8.2.2.1)
- 1.2 Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in north America (CCCNA) (8.2.3.1)
- 1.3 Letters from the following churches: Toronto (8.3.2.4); Grassie-Covenant (8.3.2.7); Tintern Spring Creek (8.3.2.8)

2. Observations

- 2.1 The CRCA and CCCNA submitted a combined report describing obstacles they encountered in operating as separate committees with a measure of overlap in their responsibilities:
 - 2.1.1 In multi-lateral situations such as the ICRC or NAPARC, challenges arose in relation to which committee should delegate how many men. GS 2016 mandated the two committees to consult with each other on the delegation to the ICRC.
 - 2.1.2 The two committees have inconsistent policies in some matters (e.g., whom to invite to our general synods). They have also experienced a lack of awareness about each other's work when it came to representing the CanRC at sister churches' General Synods or Assemblies so that they inadvertently worked at cross purposes.
 - 2.1.3 The CRCA and the CCCNA also report that 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."
- 2.2 Consequently, the CRCA and the CCCNA jointly recommend that Synod "mandate" the "CanRC inter-church relations committees" to do "a study of how CO article 50 can best be executed." The committees request that the result of their study become "part of our ecclesiastical regulations."
 - 2.2.1 This study should include the following topics:
 - 2.2.1.1 Whom to invite as delegates and whom to invite as observers to our general synods?
 - 2.2.1.2 Who is responsible for extending this invitation?
 - 2.2.1.3 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 members of synod?
 - 2.2.1.4 What synod materials are delegates and observers respectively entitled to?

- 2.2.1.5 Who is responsible for ensuring delegates and observers receive the materials they are entitled to?
- 2.2.1.6 How to have CanRC representation at multi-church conferences (e.g. ICRC, NAPARC).
- 2.2.2 This study should also indicate “how the CanRC inter-church relations committees might most effectively and efficiently work together.” Answers to challenges about working together ought to include matters as:
 - 2.2.2.1 The flow of information between the CanRC inter-church relations committees;
 - 2.2.2.2 The cooperation between CanRC inter-church relations committees;
 - 2.2.2.3 The pros and cons of consolidating and reorganizing all inter-church relations committees into one, taking into consideration reflection on this in the past;
 - 2.2.2.4 The pros and cons of maintaining different types of relationships.
- 2.3 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC supports the concept of studying how the churches can best execute our inter-church relations and offers some additional perspectives. For various reasons (e.g., Article 50 CO speaks of “churches abroad”, but migrations of peoples increasingly means that these foreign churches are in reality living in our own communities; further, becoming one federation of churches with the sister churches living on our own continent is difficult to achieve at a solely federational level). Toronto concludes that “our current practice of EF no longer suits our context and needs to be re-evaluated.” Toronto recommends that the proposed study include reflection on “if and how ecclesiastical fellowship can be acknowledged and experienced at a local/classical level while being considered at a federative level to avoid a hierarchical approach that can hinder local church interaction.”
- 2.4 The Grassie-Covenant CanRC shares its opinion that “adopting a more clearly defined structure to govern inter-church relationships would provide more clarity and consistency in our efforts to achieve Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with other faithful churches.” As an example of a “more clearly defined structure,” Grassie-Covenant draws Synod’s attention to the 5 levels of EF used by the Heritage Reformed Congregations (with details supplied), with the suggestion that Synod consider making a decision to implement a structure in that line.
- 2.5 The Tintern Spring Creek CanRC advises Synod of their conviction that “it would be beneficial for our federation to have a better policy as to our purpose and method in establishing and maintaining” existing and new relations with other churches. Tintern Spring Creek feels that too many resources are currently being used in establishing and maintaining relationships. Accordingly, Tintern commends to Synod’s attention the Rules for Ecclesiastical Relations of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (with details supplied).

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Already at GS 2010 the CRCA requested Synod to consolidate and reorganize inter-church relations by disbanding the CRCA and the CCCNA and creating one Committee on Inter-church Relations. Synod did not follow through with that request because (among other reasons) the CCCNA had not been part of the conversation. Now both the

CRCA and the CCCNA express some dissatisfaction with the full separation of the two committees.

- 3.2 The influx of migrants to Canada plus our growing awareness of Reformed Christian communities amongst these migrants prompts a reshuffling of the relationship between foreign mission and local mission. This in turn suggests that we do well to re-examine the interface between mandates typically given to a Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) (per CO Art. 50) and those given to the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA).
- 3.3 Given these new realities, our current structure for the ecclesiastical relations could benefit from a careful re-examination. Rules followed by other NAPARC and ICRC churches could assist us in improving our patterns of establishing and maintaining relationships.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Synod decide to instruct both the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) to jointly:
 - 4.1.1 Do a thorough study on how CO Art. 50 can best be executed in today's ecclesiastical realities. The items flagged in Observations 2.2-5 should be incorporated into the study.
 - 4.1.2 Submit a report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 150 – Confidential Acts

This matter was dealt with by Synod in closed session.

Motion by the clerks of GS 2019:

That the following decisions of GS 2019 be declared confidential Acts: Articles 94 (Viersen), 95 (Neerlandia), 98 (Bosma), 141 (Sloots).

Ground: Each of these deals with matters involving sensitive personal information that has never been made public and which, in view of the 9th commandment, ought not to be made public.

ADOPTED

Article 151 – Appointments

This matter was dealt with by Synod in closed session.

1. Material

- 1.1 Submissions from: Regional Synod West 2018 (8.1.2), Regional Synod East 2018 (8.1.4), the Board of Governors of CRTS (8.2.7.1, 8.2.7.2), the CWeb (8.2.10.2), the CBT (8.2.9), the CRCA (8.3.1), the CCCNA,(8.3.2), the SCBP (8.2.5.2)

2. Board of Governors of the CRTS (Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)

2.1 Academic Committee

2.1.1 From Eastern Canada: the Rev. Matthew VanLuik (2022), the Rev. John Louwerse (2025), the Rev. Clarence VanderVelde (2028)

Substitute: the Rev. Marc Jagt

2.1.2 From Western Canada: the Rev. Joe Poppe (2025), the Rev. James Slaa (2025), the Rev. Rob Schouten (2028)

Substitute: the Rev. Dave DeBoer.

2.2 Finance and Property Committee: Cornelis Medemblik (2022), Frank Oostdyk (2022), Kasper VanVeen (2025), Peter VanderSluis (2025), Alan Datema (2028)

Substitute: Brian VanderHout.

3. CPTPF (Committee for Pastoral Training Program Fund)

3.1 The Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC

4. CRCA (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad)

4.1 Otto Bouwman (2022), Harry de Boer (2028), the Rev. Dr. Roelf C. (Karlo) Janssen (convener) (2025), the Rev. Dr. Andrew Pol (2028), Henry Schouten (2025), the Rev. Carl VanDam (2025) the Rev. Arend Witten (2022)

5. CCCNA (Committee for Contact with Churches in North America)

5.1 Subcommittee East: the Rev. Doug Vandeburgt (2022), Gerrit Bos (2022) the Rev. Marc Jagt (convener) (2025), Dr. Jeff Temple (2025)

5.2 Subcommittee West: Henry VanDelden (2022), Les Vanderveen (convener) (2022), the Rev. Steve Vandavelde (2025), Peter Veenendaal (2025)

5.3 Convener for the whole CCCNA: the Rev. Marc Jagt

6. SCBP (Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise)

6.1 Alisha Boeringa (2022), the Rev. Rolf den Hollander (2022), Dr. Karen Dieleman (2022), Jeff Jans (2022), John Jager (2022), Martin Jongsma (2025), the Rev. Dr. Jannes Smith (2022), Brian VanderHout (2028) the Rev. Dick Wynia (convener) (2022)

7. CBT (Committee for Bible Translation)

7.1 The Rev. Jeff Poort (2028), the Rev. Rodney Vermeulen (2022)

8. CWeb (Committee for the Official Website)

8.1 Christie Hoeksema (2025), Jeremy Koopmans (2022), Jonathan Reinink (2025), the Rev. Tony Roukema (2022)

9. Churches for Days of Prayer and CO 54.

9.1 The Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC and the Edmonton-Providence CanRC

10. General Fund

10.1 The Carman-East CanRC

11. Financial Review of the General Fund

11.1 The Carman-West CanRC

12. CNSF (Committee for Needy Students' Fund)

12.1 The Grassie-Covenant CanRC

13. Archive Church

13.1 The Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC

14. The Church for inspecting the Archives

14.1 The Burlington-Rehoboth CanRC

15. Financial Review of GS 2019

15.1 The Edmonton-Providence CanRC

16. Address Church

16.1 The Burlington-Ebenezer CanRC

17. Committee for Publication of the Acts

17.1 The first and second clerk of GS 2019

18. Convening Church for the next General Synod

18.1 The Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC in Ontario

ADOPTED

During discussion the following was moved, seconded, and **adopted**:

To expand the SCBP to 9 members.

Synod was adjourned until 7:00pm.

Day 8 — Evening Session
Thursday, May 23, 2019

Article 152 – Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman had the meeting sing Hymn 64. He noted all synod members were present.

Article 153 – Adoption of Acts

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

Article 154 - Concluding Matters**Censure as per CO 34**

The chairman stated, with deep thankfulness to the Lord, that censure as per CO Art. 34 was not needed. He gave thanks for the fact that a good spirit of cooperation was evidenced throughout Synod.

Publication of the Acts

It was noted that the first and second clerks had been appointed to prepare the Acts of GS 2019 for publication. Synod allowed an official version of the acts to be made available on the website as soon as available. Two copies of the confidential Acts will be sent to each church.

Financial Matters

Synod members were reminded to contact br. Rob Duker regarding reimbursements.

Preparation of next General Synod

The Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC had already been appointed as convening church for GS 2022 (GS 2019 Art. 151). GS 2022 will be convened in the month of May.

Adoption of the Final Articles of the Acts

Members of Synod were requested to review the Acts received and to forward any further corrections to the clerk. The executive members of Synod will review and adopt the final articles of the Acts (articles of the last evening session).

Approval of Press Release

The press release will be prepared by the vice-chairman and approved by the executive members of Synod for publication.

Article 155 – Personal Questions and Comments

On behalf of the members of GS 2019, the vice-chairman, the Rev. Louwrese, expressed sincere gratitude to the Rev. Agema, who served so capably as chairman, referencing in particular the morning devotions on Psalm 119, his impartiality, and his good leadership. During the round appreciation was expressed for the leadership of the executive and the camaraderie during Synod.

Article 156 – Close of GS 2019

The chairman then proceeded to speak some closing remarks. He first of all gave thanks to God, noting how dependent we are upon the Lord. He expressed deep gratitude on behalf of the members of Synod for the services of the Edmonton-Immanuel congregation. He presented the host church with a large plaque bearing the text “Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. Psalm 119:18” and the wild rose as an indication of the Synod taking place in Alberta. He explained how Psalm 119:18 reminds us of the need for the Holy Spirit to guide us in God’s Word. He reflected briefly on some of the agenda items, noting matters of sadness and joy. Some words of gratitude were spoken to the brothers at Synod for their cooperation. There was good trust among all, also when opinions differed. Synod 2019 was a deliberative assembly, as it ought to be. He expressed gratitude for how the Lord had blessed Synod in this way.

On behalf the Council of Edmonton-Immanuel Elder Rob Duker presented the Rev. Agema with a gently used gavel as a token of appreciation for his work as chairman. Gratitude was also expressed for the guidance of the Rev. VanSpronsen, minister of Edmonton-Immanuel and member of Synod.

The Rev. Agema read Ephesians 1:15-23 & 3:20-21, led in prayer, and asked those present to sing Psalm 150.

Since the *agenda* had become the *acta*,
with a gentle but firm strike of the gavel
the chairman declared GS 2019
closed.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – Opening Address by the Rev. Julius VanSpronsen

Singing: Psalm 99:1, 2, 3.

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 6:11-21

The Holy Spirit gives the Church of Jesus Christ a charge in the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in His testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession (1 Timothy 6:13). The God who gives life to all things is further described in 1 Timothy 6:15-16): He “is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.”

We are doing our work for the churches in the presence of the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15), and the King of the ages (1 Timothy 1:17). As we are busy with our work and make decisions about our fraternal relations may we faithfully reflect the Sovereignty of our God who is worshipped by people of all nations, tribes and languages in their own time and place and cultures. It is a privilege to serve as instruments in the hands of Almighty God.

This same sovereign immortal God dwells in unapproachable light for He is holy. As we begin our work we prostrate ourselves before the three-fold-holy God who gives us His Holy Spirit so that we might “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness” (1 Timothy 6:11). Called to eternal life, it is our earnest prayer that we might remain faithful to the good confession so that we as delegates may honour the holiness of God and the holiness of His Church. Christ Jesus, who in His testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, is called in to witness the charge given to the Church. The charge is urgent: “keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

The commandment that Paul urges us to keep has just been explained in the letter. In 1 Timothy the Holy Spirit urges us to keep ourselves in the stewardship (or order) from God that is by faith (1:4), and then to serve the world as the pillar and buttress of the truth (3:15). Repeating the sound words of Jesus Christ (6:3; cf. 4:6) and dedicated to the continual public reading of Scripture and its exhortation and teaching (1 Timothy 4:12-13), we as churches may know the gospel message that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (1:15). There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, and this Mediator is Christ Jesus our Lord who gives access to heaven to all who believe in Him (cf. 2:3-7). This God is gathering an assembly of believers into his household (3:14-16), under the leadership of elders and deacons (3:1-13), so that they may live together as brothers and sisters in love, purity, service and mutual respect (5:1-6:2). May we do our work as faithful members of Christ’s body and may our decisions serve the edification of His Church.


As the Holy Spirit leans over and gives the treasure of the gospel to the church He urges us to keep it unstained and free from reproach. God has given His church the task of being “Protectors of the Treasure”, and we understand that if the world cannot find the gospel proclaimed and exemplified among us, than we cease to be Christ’s church. So the Holy Spirit urges us to “avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Timothy 6:20). It seems fitting to make it our goal during this synod to guard the faith entrusted to our churches here in Canada without swerving from it.

The apostle gives us this charge in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. We do our work understanding that there really is nothing more that God has to accomplish before His return. He can come any day, any moment and this adds a great weight and urgency to our responsibility to be faithful.

What a joy it is to know that the Sovereign, Eternal, Immortal King is walking with us! We join in with the prayer of verse 16: “To Him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen”. May we honour Him with our obedience to keep the commandment in its simple beauty. May we honour Him with our complete trust and faith in His eternal dominion. May we stand firm in the good confession, and shine as a light in the world until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so we begin our work today with that familiar confession of trust: “Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 124:8).

Singing: Psalm 124

APPENDIX 2 – GGRI - Letter of greetings from the Reformed Churches in Indonesia



GEREJA-GEREJA REFORMASI DI INDONESIA
KALIMANTAN BARAT

Terdaftar di Depag RI No. 1 Tanggal 8 Januari 1991
 Alamat: Sentagi Dalam, RT.03/Rw.1, Desa Bani Amas, Kec. Bengkayang
 Kab. Bengkayang, Kode Pos 79282, Prov. Kalimantan Barat-INDONESIA
 e-mail: gatotfransiskus@gmail.com Telp/HP.: -/085750933606

Number	: Nomor: 003/GGRI-KB/II/2019	Bengkayang, Februari 14, 2019
Attachment	: -	
Events	: Attend General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches	Dear: Rev. Dr. R.C. (Karla)Janssen Convener & Secretary In- <u>CANADA</u>


Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

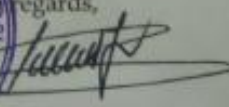
We thank our Lord Jesus Christ for His guidance and inclusion in all of us. We thank you very much for sending an invitation to attend the Synod at the Reformed Church in Canada. We received it through a secretary and discussed it yesterday when we met. The results of our meeting yesterday decided the following:

1. We really appreciate your invitation to attend the synod.
2. We regret that we have not been able to attend the synod because we have not been able to cover the costs of international travel.
3. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to join the Synod in Canada in 2017. At that time we sent our brothers namely Pastor Sarius Ismail and Marianus Tuaty Waang, M.Th.
4. We hope that even though we cannot attend the synod this year it does not reduce our sense of brotherhood in the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. We congratulate you, hopefully your meeting will produce good and useful decisions for the development of God's church in the future.

If you don't mind, we would like to express our greetings from the GGRI West Kalimantan-Indonesia congregation to our brothers and sisters in Christ here. May your life remain in God and His name be praised and glorified.

Thus we made this letter and convey it to you. Finally, we say thank you very much.



Warm regards,

 Gatot Fransiskus, S.Th
 Secretary of HuGGRI in West Kalimantan

APPENDIX 3 – ERQ – Address by the Rev. Westerveld of the Reformed Church in Quebec

Dear brothers in Christ,

Our Saviour calls us to be the light of the world. We are thankful to be that light amongst the eight million people living in the province of Quebec, Canada. The Église réformée du Québec (ERQ) is the only French-speaking Reformed confessional witness in the province of Quebec. (The ERQ pastors and elders subscribe to the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith.) The ERQ is composed of a total of 360 souls worshipping in five local congregations. Our witness is small, like a nightlight, but by God's grace shining brightly.

We are thankful for this opportunity to address you as our sister Church, for we work together to shine forth the light of the Gospel in North America and throughout the world. My presence here at your synod should be a tangible witness of our oneness in this mission. The presence of delegates of the CCCNA at several synods (November 2016, February 2017, November 2017, February 2019) is also a tangible, personal witness of our oneness.

Your synods have repeatedly encouraged “the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their missionary endeavours and special projects.” We are thankful for your generous support of the Reformed witness in Quebec, particularly through Reformed literature.

The Canadian Reformed Church in Owen Sound collaborates with the consistory in St-Georges de Beauce which oversees the work of pastor Paulin Bédard. Brother Bédard writes, translates and prepares Reformed instructional material for publication on the website, Ressources chrétiennes, the French language web page associated with the Reformational Study Centre in Pretoria, South Africa. More than 3,700 articles are available free of charge to pastors and Christians throughout the French-speaking world, particularly in developing countries.

The consistory in Quebec City oversees the publication of several books. An Evangelical publisher in Trois-Rivières is printing our books under the banner Éditions La Rochelle, the name of the first French confession penned by John Calvin. The publisher advertises and distributes our books in Quebec, Europe, Haiti and French-speaking Africa. Recent publications include John Benton's Evangelistic Calvinism and Paulin Bédard's *Le solide fondement du salut*, an in-depth study of the Canons of Dort, in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the synod of Dort.

As many of you are aware, the same consistory has undertaken to translate into French The Covenant of Love penned by the late Rev. Clarence Stam. Lord willing, the book will appear in October 2019 both in print and on the website Ressources chrétiennes. Please extend our gratitude to the churches for their financial and prayer support of these publications.

Your synod also encourages the churches to prayerfully support the Reformed witness of the ERQ, for which we are eternally thankful. Please pray for workers in the harvest of Quebec. One of our pastors was called to serve a Canadian Reformed congregation. (We would highlight the observation in the report of CCCNA that calling a pastor from the ERQ “has significant implications for a small federation.”) A PCA missionary was asked to serve in France instead of Quebec. In the spring of 2018, our Lord called home our brother and pastor, Guy Brouillet, who died following a rather routine heart surgery. Guy served as a military chaplain, filled vacant pulpits and mentored the young pastor and a chaplain of our downtown Montreal congregation.

The Lord of the Church is raising up new workers for the harvest. Our synod recently granted licensure to two brothers, Blaise Tsabang and George-Émile Durand, even as they complete their

studies at Farel Reformed Theological Seminary. The congregation in Repentigny called Olivier Imbernon, a pastoral candidate who is completing his studies at the John Calvin Seminary in Aix-en-Provence, France. We also give thanks to our Lord for having raised up two elders to serve our churches.

With respect to the ERQ synod, in May 2017 we adopted vows for the ordination of men to the pastoral ministry. We are thankful for the comments and suggestions on the proposed vows received from sister churches. Committee work continues on the ordination vows for elders and deacons, the ministerial examinations of pastoral candidates and pastors coming from outside the ERQ, the digital archiving of synod minutes, and the financial policy for the synod budget.

Finally, even as you partner with us in the Quebec mission, we are seeking to be missional. Our Montreal congregation is sponsoring a Syrian refugee family. Our Quebec City congregation is sending a missionary worker to Lyon, France to work as an administrator of a Christian radio network. Our members, who are a minority of minorities – less than one percent of the Quebec population profess an evangelical faith -- seek to be light in the world through their good works and their word of testimony. In a world increasingly secular, individualistic, materialistic, hedonistic – in short, a world increasingly dark, our nightlight shines more distinctly.

We pray for the Lord's blessing upon your synod, its deliberations and its decisions. We also pray for a blessing upon your fellowship as brothers of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

APPENDIX 4 – FCC – Address by Elder Dr. Wanliss of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

Fathers and Brethren,

I bring you warm greetings from the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) and the Ecumenical Relations Committee which I represent. It is a distinct pleasure for me to be with you. Our bonds in Christ are precious and are strengthened due to the seven years I spent in in Edmonton in close fellowship with Canadian Reformed brethren. This particular building (Emmanuel CanRef) has sweet associations as I have worshipped here in the 1990s and attended the wedding of br.

Duker. It was a pleasant surprise to hear Rev. Aasman preaching last night and to sing together from Psalm 133:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

It is indeed a precious ointment to sing together and spend time with brethren who I have not seen in almost two decades. For the benefit of those not familiar with the FCC, allow me to briefly describe our denomination. We are a small, reformed, Presbyterian denomination consisting of just over 40 congregations. We adhere tenaciously to the positions adopted by the Church of Scotland at the first and second reformations, and the unmodified Westminster Confession of Faith remains our secondary standard. The divergence of the Free Church from the Church of Scotland dates from the Disruption of 1843 when the Evangelical Party in the Church of Scotland as by Law Established, withdrew from the Establishment to form the Church of Scotland, Free. The immediate cause of the Disruption was the insistence by the civil courts that the Established Church had to ordain men to the parish ministry irrespective of their acceptability to the parishioners.

The Free Church has continued down until the present day. At the Commission of Assembly in January 2000 a division occurred because a majority was determined to act in a way that was against the constitution or ‘rule book’ of the church, which all office-bearers must uphold. A number of ministers and elders signed a ‘Declaration of Reconstitution’ in which they pledged themselves to continue the Free Church in a constitutional manner. They are the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). The addition to the title makes us in no way less ‘Free Church’ than we were before the sad division of 2000.

Our government includes rule by elders and ministers in kirk sessions, presbyteries, synods, and general assembly. Our worship is simple, focused on the Word of God, experiential preaching, and the free offer of the gospel to sinners. We sing psalms exclusively without accompaniment by mechanical instruments.

Our churches are located primarily in Scotland. There are four congregations with ministers in the USA which form part of the US Presbytery, which functions with equal status to the Scottish Presbyteries. The churches in North America are not part of a diaspora and, until Rev. Beers came to Mebane in 2018, there were no Scots in our congregations here. There is a mission work in Smiths Falls, Canada, two works in Spain, two in Northern Ireland, and one in France. In the next few weeks the minister from Greenville, SC will be visiting our mission in Sri Lanka, in Vavuniya and Mullaitheevu to support the missionary, Rev Shanmugam Partheepan.

Rev. Partheepan is a native Sri Lankan who trained at our seminary in Scotland and returned to

his home country to bring the gospel to those in bondage to Satan. We think of Rev. Partheepan as the Sri Lankan John Knox.

I have here a gift for your Chairman, Rev. Agema, which is a token of our warm regard for our brethren in the Canadian Reformed Church and of appreciation for your gracious hospitality. This is a copy of the Master's Trumpet, a quarterly magazine published by Grange Press, the publishing imprint of the US Presbytery. In 2020 we hope to publish in the Master's Trumpet an article by Hendrick De Cock, with whom the brethren in Canada are very familiar.

Next week is our General Assembly in Edinburgh so, brethren, as we have prayed, and continue to pray, for the Lord's blessing on your deliberations in this General Synod, please pray for us. I bring these greetings on behalf of the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

APPENDIX 5 – RCUS – Address by the Rev. Grassmid of the Reformed Church in the United States

Esteemed brethren of the Canadian Reformed Churches,
Greetings from the Reformed Church in the United States.

Firstly, we praise the Lord for His faithfulness to the Canadian Reformed Churches from generation to generation. As I have spoken with the several delegates, members, and friends of the CanRC, I have been consistently impressed with the truth that the Lord is working powerfully amongst the saints of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Secondly, we would like to encourage you in the weighty matters which are before you during this synod. I note particularly that there are appeals concerning such items as the propriety of women voting in the congregational meeting; we ourselves have a position paper on this subject coming before our synod next week. Additionally you, as we, must struggle with the difficult issue of dealing with fraternal relations with those who have changed their practice. We pray for your wisdom, and look forward to learning from you as you deliberate.

As I have reviewed the agenda, and been given the privilege of sitting in on a couple committee meetings; I certainly appreciate the deliberative manner in which the delegates are seeking to work through the issues in a God glorifying, and church edifying manner.

Thirdly, the hospitality and fellowship of you our brethren is very dear to not only this fraternal delegate, but also to us as a denomination. Your faithfulness in sending fraternal delegates to our synod has been a great encouragement to us, and we covet the continuation of our friendships. We have grown to love the encouragement and fellowship which has matured through these familiar ties which have developed, and continues to grow.

I appreciate this opportunity to address our dear friends of the Canadian Reformed Churches; it is our prayer that by way of these opportunities, our bonds of love will continue to flourish. Sadly, I am only able to be present for the first week of your synod, as our annual synod will convene next Monday in Kansas City, MO.

At our most recent Synod in Golden Valley, Minnesota, we dealt with a few items of interest:

Firstly, as a result of recent actions of the RCN “to allow the ordination of women to all ecclesiastical offices; and whereas this is in direct violation of Scripture, and the Belgic Confession article 30, and whereas our stipulated agreement in ‘92 stated that we would ‘Take heed to one another’s doctrine, liturgy, and church government, that there be no deviation from Holy Scriptures, or from the reformed confessions’”- for these reasons, the 272nd Synod of the RCUS has by a vote without dissent, severed all ecclesiastical relations with the RCN. We then proceeded to prayer for the return of the RCN to submission to Scripture and the confessions.

Secondly, we recommitted the paper which was submitted by a special committee concerning the theological implications of the practice of cremation. This committee was reconstituted, and has further edited the paper, and it is slated to be presented to our synod next week.

Thirdly, we also recommitted the paper which was submitted by a special committee concerning whether or not the exercise of the vote by women in a congregational meeting was an act of authority. (The exact question was, “Does the congregational vote have authority according to Scripture?” In reconstituting the committee, the new question being asked is: “Does a Christian woman (single or married) exercise authority over a man when she votes?”). We currently have no position on this question, only conflicting traditions.

This committee further edited their paper, and it is also slated to be presented at our synod next week. The committee is recommending that the churches review the paper, and address it at our 2020 synod.

May the Lord bless the proceedings of Synod.

APPENDIX 6 – FRCSA – Address by br. Moes of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

Mr. Chairman, dear brothers delegates and guests

I should like to start with a quote from the letter of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians, chapter 4: 1 – 6....

This is why we are here. Firstly, you as representatives of the CanRC. But also those from sister-churches. We, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA), wish to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit with you through the bond of peace and we are very grateful that you have given us the opportunity to do so. In terms of physical space, we are on the other side of the world, but in terms of faith we are one family, sharing one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father.

The FRCSA are a very small church federation of almost 2 000 members. During the 1950's and 1960's members of the Reformed Churches (vrijgemaakt) in the Netherlands immigrated to South Africa. Four congregations were established, two in Pretoria, one in Johannesburg and one in Cape Town. During the 1960's mission work was started in townships around Pretoria and later also in townships around Cape Town. In his young days, your Prof. Arjan de Visser of Hamilton was one of the missionaries in Pretoria.

The mission work was blessed and has led to the establishment of three independent mission churches in our federation. In addition, we have at present eight mission preaching locations, with seven missionaries. We trust that after a number of years the original immigration congregations will be a minority in our church federation. However, financially the mission churches are very poor and they remain dependent on funding from the "immigrant churches". We hope that in time that will also change.

On behalf of the FRCSA, I bring heartfelt greetings to you, as our family in our Lord Jesus Christ. From the beginning of our church federations, in the 1950's, there has been a blessed familial unity between our churches and this unity has grown deeper over the last number of years. The more we learn about each other, the more we have come to appreciate the spiritual bond of faith which we share.

Thank you very much for the delegation that you sent to our Synod Soshanguve North 2017, to demonstrate the value of your relationship with us. In our visit here we wish to strengthen and deepen that relationship and find ways where we can support each other in service to the kingdom. We look forward to again welcome your delegates at our next synod in Belhar, a suburb of Cape Town, the Lord willing in October 2020. May also through this work His kingdom come.

I should like to give you a brief overview of a few aspects of our church life which may be of interest to you.

Theological Education

A matter close to our hearts, that we have been thinking and praying about much in the last few years, is theological education. The harvest is ready, but the workers are few! As a small federation we have always struggled with finding out what the best way is to equip our students for the ministry. Over the last few years we have worked more and more closely with the CRTS in Hamilton. We would like to express our appreciation for your cooperation in this. The yearly visits that the professors have made have had a lasting impact on some of our students and have

caused our churches to grow much more familiar with the work done at the CRTS. It has also motivated more young men (7) in our country to consider the ministry. Our own minister in Cape Town, Rev. Johan Bruintjes, who is a graduate of your seminary, is clear proof of the good reformed level of education provided there.

In 2017, the FRCSA have started a pilot project with the CRTS to train our theological students, to be equipped for the reformed ministry. The pilot project is to use video recordings of classes at CRTS and to use these in South Africa under study guidance of one of our local experienced ministers. Already in 2018 the CRTS has established a work committee to investigate the possibility of distance education. We look forward to seeing the results of that study.

The Lord willing, over the next number of years you will see several of our students bundled up against the cold Canadian winters to complete the four-year Master of Divinity Course. Our hope and prayer is that throughout the course of study in the practical training programme and after they graduate, they return to their own context and serve in South Africa, either in congregational ministry or in the mission field.

Mission Work

The work of training up ministers is vital, because the African continent, including South Africa, is ripe for and in need of the Gospel. Just in the past year we have seen another mission congregation planted (Fisantekraal) and we are presently in the process of instituting a fourth mission congregation as an independent church (Wesbank). We recently experienced a dire shortage in ministers, but at present six of the seven churches have their own minister, while we have seven missionaries, which is quite a blessing. In addition, there is the Reformed Study Centre, which supplies sermons and reformed study material internationally through the internet (Rev. Ryan Kampen – Clarion).

One of the challenges that we are currently experiencing is that, while the mission work continues to expand, the funding is decreasing. Our Dutch sister-churches, who have up to this point supported about 90% of the mission work of our churches, have decided to reduce their funding gradually and significantly over the next couple of years. Without additional financial support, the four immigrant churches will not be able to continue the mission work at the present level, while the indigenous churches are unfortunately not yet able to contribute substantially. If there are possibilities for support within the Canadian Reformed Churches, we should very much like to hear about this.

However, through these developments, our present mission constraints have also come as a blessing, as the churches in South Africa now are taking greater financial responsibility for the mission work and we have had to deepen our reliance on our Heavenly Father, trusting that he will provide.

Relations with Churches Abroad

As a founding member, the FRCSA is still actively involved in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). Attending ICRC meetings provides us with an opportunity to meet with delegates of those churches with whom we have a sister-church relationship. Because of the size of our federation and the limited man-power available, we have decided to focus most of our efforts to strengthen the bonds which we already have, particularly with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. But through the ICRC, we stay also in contact with other Reformed and Presbyterian churches in the world and in Africa in particular. Furthermore, we have

opportunities to participate with others in ICRC working groups, to share knowledge and experience and learn from and cooperate with others.

We share a very close relationship with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. Because of the political and social unrest and limited work opportunities in our country (our official general unemployment rate is 28% and the youth unemployment is 55%) many of our members have moved to West-Australia and found a home among the brothers and sisters there. We value this relationship deeply.

Our relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands has been under strain over the last decade, as they have continued to not heed the warnings of our church and other sister-churches like yourselves. The core of the problem, as we see it, is that they appear to have opened up the Word of God to subjective interpretation. This is a matter of deep concern for the FRCSA because for so many years we called ministers trained at the Theological University at Kampen and so many of our members have family relations in the Netherlands. And unlike our brothers and sisters in Australia and North America, we share a rather similar language and heritage with the Dutch.

On the other hand, we continue to be deeply grateful for their mission support and they have expressed that our theological differences will not directly affect this support. But when it comes to the truth of God's word, we will not let financial support influence any decision on our sister-church relationship. We pray that God grant also this Synod much wisdom as you deliberate how to go forward.

The above developments have forced us to look more to our other sister churches for encouragement and support. This has been a time where we have grown closer to you, even calling one of your own from the CRTS. So, although you may not share a time zone with us like the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, or a hemisphere and ocean as the Australian churches, we do share a minister, who assists actively in deepening our relationship and love for one another.

Relations with Churches in Africa

We are very excited to be part of ICRC Africa, where we wish to work more with churches and federations that are closer to home. The African churches have much to contribute to the community of faith globally, and by the grace of God, Africa is a continent where Christianity is growing. We believe that the Christian faith is a critical basis for lifting the African people out of poverty and exploitation.

Locally there has also been an effort to work more closely with the Reformed Churches of South Africa, who are also members of the ICRC. We are thankful that on a local basis there have been "preaching exchanges", although nationally not much has taken place, e.g. due to their position on women deacons. We look forward to continuing our discussions with them both locally and nationally.

Closing

In closing, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to be here with you in Edmonton and for the privilege you have afforded me to address you on behalf of the FRCSA and to convey our warm greetings to you. May the blessed Lord Jesus, our King and Saviour, continue to bind us together in truth, as we sojourn toward a better country. May He richly bless all your deliberations, and may his Spirit of wisdom fill each one of you, so that the decisions

made here may be for the edification and encouragement of the Church of Jesus Christ, here and globally. To him be the glory forever, in this age and the age to come.

APPENDIX 7 – IRB – Address by the Rev. Gama of the Reformed Churches in Brazil

Beloved brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is a very great joy to be here with you. To see our brothers who have labored with us in Brazil. Who could have an experience working together very closely. Everything that the Holy Spirit is doing through the Word in the midst of our people. And the Holy Spirit working through the word and the doctrines of the word that we call the Reformed faith.

I and my colleagues are here as spokesmen for a small federation of churches in Brazil. This federation of churches which was born through the work in cooperation with the Dutch churches and the Canadian churches. And speaking more specifically about the cooperation between the Brazilian churches and the Canadian churches, our churches want to thank the Canadian Reformed Churches for the 48 years of work together in Brazil. For all of the support. For all of the prayer. For all of the dedication in sending missionaries to our land. When in 1970 the first Canadian Reformed missionary arrived in Brazil, Pastor Cornelius VanSpronsen, we give profound thanks for the work that has been done in Brazil by the Canadian Reformed Churches. And we want to also express the necessity that the brothers can keep on providing this support in Brazil. Support with your prayers. Support with your cooperation. So that the Lord will continue to perfect and develop and continue this work in Brazil. We started to exist as missionary churches with the cooperation with the Canadian Churches. We started in a little village on the outskirts, in a village of fishermen, where the houses were just about falling down. With very poor people, but with the faithful work by the missionaries who were sent by the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Lord has been blessing this work.

Until the year 2000 we were few churches, 5 churches, and in the year 2000 the Lord gave us the opportunity to become a federation of churches. Since then we have experienced what the Lord has been doing with our little federation. In terms of our specific work as a federation of churches, from 5 small churches, since 2000 we started to work not with a local vision as it was in the beginning with the work in Brazil, but seeing the big mission field, which is a country that has 210 million souls. 5 large regions. Large cities and very, very big cities. A country where the entire world is turning its attention to, not just the world of business but also the religions which want to destroy the west.

So we found ourselves in the face of this and we saw to amplify, to spread the work in Brazil. Especially when our beloved brother Pastor Ken Wieske arrived, and he worked as a real warrior, ‘the red beard’. And with the dynamic vision of the work of Reformed mission and with the wind of Reform that is blowing in Brazil, by means of Reformed literature, Reformed conferences and a broad vision which pastor Ken Wieske implemented in the mission work, our little confederation of churches continued being small but with growth which is large for us.

We have arrived at the year 2019 with 8 instituted churches: 6 in the North East; 2 in the South East. Missionary churches: 6 in the North East; 1 in the Central West in the capital of our nation, Brazilia; 1 in the South East; and 1 in the South. 9 living missionary congregations. Our last census, count, we arrived at 904 members. In a country where there are many Reformed churches you might not think this is very much, but in our country we have churches that have reformed tradition in Brazil, 150 years of work in Brazil, but which we are not able to [join] for various reasons, we cannot plant the Reformed faith in our nation. This small federation of churches, by the grace of God, the presence is being felt despite the smallness.

We have 12 ministers of the Word. One minister who is close to being ordained, we have a seminary, we have a theological institute, the John Calvin Institute, which despite being small, by the grace of God, is becoming a point of reference in our country. By the hard work of the missionaries that came from here. This is our reality as a federation of Churches, 8 instituted churches, 9 missionary congregations, 12 ministers, and a theological institute and the greater part of this growth has happened between 2000 and now. Each missionary coming from this federation, has done his part in this great battle. All of the work of the missionaries, even those of the ones that came before 2000, and the work begun in 2000 by pastor Ken Wieske, who was followed by pastor VanSpronsen, and continues with pastor Witteveen, there is a lot of work brothers.

We have a large country to Reform, our nation, because of this we need your prayers, we need your cooperation, so that we can together in this great harvest, this great field, that we can gain many souls for the Lord Jesus. We can reform the Brazilian nation with a small federation but of the great, great work of God all of our country of Brazil. Brazil needs the Canadian churches working together. We have one King Jesus Christ and His Father is subjugating all of His enemies. We see how much the Canadian churches are working so that the enemies of Jesus Christ are subjugated, defeated. In the great day of the return of the Lord, when we are in our resurrected bodies, transformed to be like the body of Jesus Christ, the brothers here in Canada, will be able to see the result of all this work that the churches have been able to support and do in this great harvest. The work in Brazil is not just to support and to send, it is to the glory of God. This is the motive for all of the support until now and in that day you will see that your work is not in vain for the Lord. This is the word of the Lord: ‘Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain’. (1Cor 15:58) Amen.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak and may God bless this Synod.

APPENDIX 8 – GKv – Addresses of the Rev. IJbema and the Rev. Dr. Oosterhuis of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands**The Rev. IJbema's address – greetings**

Dear brothers, Isn't it the most beautiful of all times, to be together in this season and meet as children of God? No, I'm not referring to the season of spring, although spring in itself as it was last weekend is reason enough to glorify the Creator God. But now I refer to the fact that we live in the weeks between Easter and Pentecost. With Easter, we looked back, and remembered, and celebrated what must be the most glorious of all the great acts of God, that Jesus Christ our Lord has risen from the dead. After Easter, we look forward towards Pentecost. We hope for and long for the Spirit of the Lord. Not only has the Lord saved us, He will also sanctify those who are his family. This season, isn't it just beautiful? Isn't it a joy to be able to share our faith in times like these? I'm thankful that I can greet you on behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, greet you in the name of our risen Lord.

Of course these times are not only beautiful. A sense of distance and an atmosphere of growing apart have long clouded the relationship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. And when Synod Meppel 2017 of the Reformed Churches decided to declare, that one is still on Gospel territory, within the boundaries of the Bible, when one sees the possibility for women in the church of Christ to serve in the offices of deacon, elder, and minister of the Word, ... Well, you all have read the report of your Synod's Subcommittee on relations with Churches in The Netherlands. The gap can no longer be bridged.

Reflecting on this sad situation, I've tried to look back a little on where we come from. If you allow me, it was back in 1951 that a letter was sent, sent from here in Edmonton actually. The churches of Lethbridge, Edmonton, Neerlandia, and Georgetown let the Churches in the Netherlands know, with some sense of pride I feel, that they were now named 'Canadian Reformed Churches', and that they asked for a form of formal relationship between the federations in Holland and in Canada. This letter was discussed in Holland at the Synod of Kampen 1952. Discussed, indeed. There were brothers at Synod, who argued against such a formal relationship between federations. For they said, there is a unity in faith, and that reality needs no formal structure. Synod Kampen then decided that, indeed, there was a spiritual bond, and that this bond was well served with a formal relationship as well.

On a personal note, if you allow me, now I stand here in Edmonton 67 years later, I deeply regret the way things are heading. I still see that faith-reality. I know some of you here in Canada and I sense that deep bond of faith that needs no formal structure. And I know some of the brothers and sisters in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands also well enough, to know that they too would be willing to sacrifice everything for their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And I stand between both and can only regret the way things are heading.

Yet my official task at this moment is only to greet you, on behalf of the brothers and sisters in the Netherlands. On a practical note, taskwise, Reverend Dr Oosterhuis is here as the chair of Synod Meppel, and he is appointed to share more background information on Synod Meppel's decisions with you. Also, it is not my task to look into the future, what our Synod Goes in 2020 will or will not decide. Maybe your Deputies are right when they foresee no change in Synod's decisions, maybe they are not. All I can say and must say and want to say is: the Churches in the Netherlands would wish the formal bond with your churches to also continue. That's what Synod

Meppel declared and that still is the desire of the churches. May the grace of the risen Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Thank you.

The Rev. Dr. Oosterhuis' Address:

Dear chairman, dear brothers and sisters,

First of all I want to thank you for your kind hospitality, which my companion and I have experienced since we arrived in Edmonton already last week Friday. This hospitality reminds me of the last time that I was as a guest in your midst as Canadian Reformed Churches. That was in the summer of 1966.

I was 17 years old only and came for two months for a holiday job with Ziedler's Plywood Plant. As a practical preparation for my study in forestry.

I stayed with my family at 11628 50th Avenue, and they belonged to the CRC. But weekly families came from your churches, especially a number of Leffers families came to pick me up to bring me to your church services and have me over the whole Sunday and we enjoyed Christian fellowship together.

And in the church, I was even welcomed from the pulpit as a guest from the GKv, when I am not mistaken by Rev. Van Popta.

In those days I had no theological aspirations yet. And maybe for that reason I used to have a problem in the morning services with the reading of the ten commandments. I had a problem with the tenth commandment, where we are told not to desire the donkey of our neighbour. There were no donkeys in the place where I lived and I felt not the slightest intention to steal a donkey. So I thought this was not applicable to me.

I struggled even more with the fourth commandment, which mentions the 7th day to be celebrated as day of rest. But we in The Netherlands and, as I came to know, also you in Canada used the first day of the week as a day of rest. Maybe these problems were among the triggers finally not to go for forestry but for theology and to become a minister of the Word.

This brings me to the topic on which I would like to concentrate in my speech, the topic of hermeneutics, more precise the hermeneutics at the background of the synod's decision on women in office.

According to your deputies these hermeneutics would clearly demonstrate how our churches have neglected the divine authority of Scripture, in order to be free to adjust our church life to the egalitarian culture in which we live. This is the main reason for their proposal to discontinue the relationship with our churches.

One of our professors, prof. A.L.Th. de Bruijne, expressed his disappointment about synod's decision in the *Nederlands Dagblad*. According to him the Synod had tried to solve the problem of women in office, just by biblical exegesis and had totally neglected the hermeneutical considerations.

The conclusion of your deputies is quite the opposite.

But what do they mean with new hermeneutics in synod's decision on women in office?

The main point that returns time and again is the consideration of the historical and cultural background of the Bible text and the comparison of it with the actual cultural context of the reader, when it comes to the application of the text to God's people today.

In my presentation and attempt of clarification of synod's decision I would like to focus on these two questions. What's wrong with and what's new about the way the synod approaches and applies the Bible in her decision on women in office?

What's the problem, when the cultural context of a Bible passage is taken into account when the reader tries to apply that passage to himself or the church of Christ nowadays? In his revelation God himself accommodates his message to those to whom he originally revealed Himself. All his revelation is full of it. It's a prerequisite for divine self revelation. In anthropomorphic figures and anthropopathic expressions the inconceivable God accommodates himself to the common human imaginativeness. He does the same when it comes to the worldview in biblical times, accommodating himself to the ancient worldview of those to whom he addressed himself through men and women of that same worldview and culture.

But also when it comes to his commandments and religious institutions God is accommodating to the restrictions of his people, as given by original sin, their human restrictions and the world in which and the peoples and the religions among which they live.

Therefore application today of all kind of biblical institutions requires our knowledge of that context. Think of polygamic practices like the levirate marriage, quite in contradiction to the creation order. Think of circumcision. We will never fully understand the covenant sign of circumcision in Israel when we do not take into account the extra-biblical practice of circumcision among the surrounding peoples.

So far it's mainly about God's revelation through Moses and all the prophets in the OT. But the same can be said of God's revelation through the apostles. Think of Paul, in his writings and also in his apostolic practice. He takes into account the situation and the conditions of those whom he approaches with the message. So Paul circumcised Timothy, according to Acts 16:3, 'because of the Jews'. And there are more examples of such accommodation to the Jews. This should be taken into account for instance when it comes to the liturgical rules in early Christian services. Much was taken over from the synagogue. On the other hand Paul also accommodated to the customs of the Gentiles. And he instructs for instance women to do the same when it comes their non-Christian husbands in order not to be an obstacle for them to embrace the gospel. We have to keep that in mind reading and applying different instructions for the early Christian churches. Otherwise we might be blind to the real intension of God's revelation towards us nowadays.

This hermeneutical rule is crystal clear from the teaching of Jesus.

For instance in Matthew 19. The Pharisees approached Jesus with the question: 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?' Based on the revelation about the creation of husband and wife, Jesus declares that it is not allowed. Then the Pharisees refer to the Mosaic institution of a divorce letter. They copied what they read in the books of Moses literally to the daily life in the fullness of time, which resulted in an ungodly lifestyle. Jesus therefore criticized this practice by emphasizing that they had to take into account the historical background of this

prescription of Moses. I think this is a basic hermeneutical instruction of Jesus. So therefore there is nothing wrong with this kind of hermeneutics.

Let's now focus on the question, what's new in the hermeneutics at the background of the synod's decision?

It's as old as the church is. Taught by Jesus and practiced by his apostles. That's also, as I understand it now, how the observance of the seventh day silently disappeared in the first centuries of Christian church history. Without any explicit command of the Lord the early church chose to celebrate the first day of the week as sabbath day, contradicting the text of the fourth commandment, which emphatically bases this practice on creation order, God's command on the first seventh day.

This way of dealing with certain biblical prescriptions is also practiced nowadays. Think of Paul's prescription in 1 Corinthians 11:5, also emphatically based on creation order. A wife needs to cover her head when praying or prophesying. But as far as I know, I don't remember how it was in the sixties, this prayer practice at least nowadays is no obligation anymore in your churches.

This treatment of Paul's prescription seems to be based on hermeneutical intuition.

But intuition is not always reliable. We should give account of the way we treat the Bible by describing our hermeneutical principle.

This is what happened in the GKv step by step ever since the Liberation 1944, 75 years ago which we gratefully celebrate this year. One of the blessings of the Liberation was the revival of a redemptive-historical approach of the Bible, thanks to church leaders like Schilder and Holwerda, replacing the Biblicist exemplaric approach which had become dominant in the preaching practice in the Reformed churches in the first part of that century.

The movement of Schilder, Holwerda and others taught us not to use the Bible as a divine handbook with timeless prescriptions and models to be copied during all ages. It should be read first of all as God's book of church history, describing salvation history through which God reveals himself.

This reading of the Bible as book of salvation history implies the need of taking into account of the historical context for the wright understanding and application of God's revelation.

As a young boy I thought the tenth commandment was partly not applicable to me, until I came to know that in the ancient culture and economy the donkey was something to be compared with a car or a truck for its owner. From that time on I was able to apply that part of the tenth commandment adequately to my fascination about the Oldsmobile of the family Leffers and the Mercedes of our Dutch neighbours.

For the same reason, as a student in Kampen 45 years ago, I would not be accepted to become an Old Testament scholar, unless I studied the Akkadian language with prof. J.P. Lettinga. Not just to have a better understanding of the Semitic languages, but also to be able to study the ancient Babylonian and Assyrian culture and religions, the famous Law of King Hammurabi, the omen texts of the baru priests and the inscriptions of the Assyrian kings. And that same professor Lettinga was also welcomed in the fifties as an expert in the Ugarit literature, useful for a better understanding of the Canaanite cultures among which the people of Israel lived.

The need of this knowledge has also been expressed by professor Jacob van Bruggen in his book *Het Lezen van de Bijbel*, 1981. The way in which according to Gen. 16:4-6 Sarah and Abraham treated their female slave Hagar, can not be understood without the knowledge of the rules about slavery in the Law of King Hammurabi, he explains.

In another book *Het Kompas van het Christendom* (2002), he says, that when we would neglect this kind of information, we would be guilty for the loss of the clarity of the bible.

This focus on hermeneutics in our churches finally resulted in a publication of the TUK *Gereformeerde Hermeneutiek Vandaag* (2017), explaining and giving account of a hermeneutical practice that has been in use in our churches already for many decades.

Of course this book can not be considered as the hermeneutics of the synod 2017. Think of the critics of prof. De Bruijne and think of the fact that this book was only published after the synod's decision on women in office. But I am sure, that it is in line with the hermeneutical practice that has been in use in the reformed churches in the Netherlands since decades, and in line with what initially was taught by Jesus.

Of course there is much more to be said about synod's decision. You can disagree with synod's exegetical conclusions, for instance about 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2. But then one would need to deliver far more evidence concerning those texts than your deputies do. Are these texts about the submission of women in general to men in general? Why then is the Greek verb for submission in the whole NT without exception only used for the submission of wives to their own husbands? Is it true that the place of action which Paul has in mind in 1 Tim. 2 was the worship service? Why then does he in verse 8 speak of 'every place'? What was the meaning of prophecy in 1 Cor. 14? How strong are the arguments of your deputies to reject the classical opinion, that it was about preaching, just as it was on the day of Pentecost, proclaiming the great deeds of God? Etc.

If you want I can provide you the digital version of dr. N.J. Hommes' *De Vrouw in de Kerk* (1953) very useful, especially when it comes to the exegesis of 1 Cor. 14 and 1 Tim. 2.

But the main reason to discontinue the relationship with our churches, which your deputies find in the hermeneutics at the background of the synod's decision, is not sufficient to give account of the discontinuation of our relationship towards your churches and ours, but most of all to our common heavenly Head of the church, Jesus Christ.

Therefore we hope and pray that your synod will not decide according to their proposal and take time, at least until our next synod, before deciding about the relationship with our churches.

Dear brothers, may the Lord bless you as synod working through the whole agenda, may He grant you the guidance of the Holy Spirit. May He richly bless you as Reformed churches in Canada, with whom, ever since 1951, we feel closely united in Christ.

APPENDIX 9 – GGRC – Address of the Rev. Dethan of the Reformed Calvinist Churches [in Indonesia]

Esteemed Brothers,

Let me begin this speech by praising our Triune God, for His love and protection that I may be here in your midst.

It is a great joy for me to address you in this Synod on behalf of the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC).

Through this golden opportunity, on behalf of our federation, I would like to pass on Christian greetings from all the brothers and sisters in our federation (GGRC) Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia, to you all here.

About 30 years ago, together with my colleagues, we were trained by Rev. Dr. A.J. Pol at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Sumba Island. As a result of this long training of Dr. Pol, currently 80 % of the pastors in our federation have been trained by him. We were so glad that in the year 2013, we could meet him, who together with Rev. Ray Sikkema from URCNA, came to visit us and meet with all of us from our federation as the church leaders. We were happy to hear that some of the information of his report was used by CECCA of URCNA and was presented at the URC General Synod. As result in year 2016, URCNA accepted our federation as their sister church. However, we regret the fact that there was no mention of Dr. Pol's visit and report to your Synod 2016 in Dunville. We learned that Dr. Pol was appointed and sent by your Synod 2013 in Carmen. And the purpose of sending him that time was that your Synod could study our federation because you need more information. So when Dr. Pol came, come with all questions that you need to know, so we thought his information will be presented at your synod 2016 in Dunville. And you might make a decision. Surprisingly you postponed again and the report was not presented there. You talk about us, please ask Dr. Pol, because he made that report. He made a very good positive report and met all our leaders. And he knows Indonesia well and he trained us and he met all our leaders, so this golden opportunity I think you should have a meeting with Dr. Pol to find out that report that he has made.

We thank the Lord that in the month of August last year, you sent Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen who on behalf of your CRCA came to visit and meet our deputies as well as our leaders. The same questions Dr. Karlo asked that Dr. Pol had asked. So surprising to us: how come you ask the same questions that Rev. Pol has asked us? Exactly the same questions. So maybe it is good that I open to you so that you can probably think about it and please trust your own people like Dr. Pol and Rev. Karlo. We thank you anyway that you sent him to come to meet with our leaders so that through all this information, hopefully can provide all of you here with what they have seen, have talked and have collected. So you don't send more people and waste your money and time to investigate us again and again. We thought Dr. Pol should be enough because he knows Indonesian, he trained us and he knows our culture very well. I don't think anybody can come on behalf of your federation than Dr. Pol, who knows Indonesia very well. I don't want to repeat all the report that your CRCA already made because that is going to waste time. You all can read it in the report of your CRCA for this Synod.

Let me continue telling you about my country how we are working there. We live in the middle of the largest Muslim country in the world. You might think the Middle East countries are the largest but you would be mistaken if you think that. We live in the largest Muslim country in the world, we have more than 260 million people. And 90 percent of that population is Muslim. We

are a small reformed federation there. We are under attack and persecuted, and we are your reformed brothers, working hard together for God's kingdom, we thought that by having connection with you, maybe you might help us, or maybe you could learn from us. Because those Muslim people also come to your country. But by postponing and postponing, it might waste the time, while the working is a lot. There are less than 20 thousand Reformed people who hold the Three Form of Unity as their church confessions. Even though we are so small, we still like to reach out to our country as much as possible. Why? We believe that nothing is impossible with God.

In order to reach this goal, we thought that as Reformed Brothers who hold the same confessions and hold the same church order of Dort, as well as member of ICRC, it would be great to have a sister church relationship, so we can work together and do cooperation together in God's Kingdom. That was why in the year 2001 as federation, we approached your Synod that we could be sister churches and so we could help each other build God's Kingdom. Unfortunately this took a long time yet, while the harvesting work in the fields for the spreading of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a great need. You, yourself can imagine how many more things we could have done together for God's Kingdom during the year 2001 until now 2019.

We hope that after gathering all the information that has made by your CRCA up until now, it should be sufficient for you to make your decision in connection with having a sister relationship with our federation. After waiting from year 2001 up until now, we then just give it to the Lord, since He is the one who knows and will guide His own church. Whether you will be willing to accept us as you sister church or not is your own decision and we respect that, even though the delay hurts us.

As a Reformed federation, we are still keeping busy with outreach work in the mission field, preaching the Word of God in worship services both on Sunday as well as on the other days of the week. We also are still preaching the Heidelberg Catechism to our church members. As living and active churches, our local churches love to keep doing the mission work in our country. We did ourselves on the island of Timor, Sabu, and Rote.

During this last decade, we expanded our mission work wings to the island of Java, which has a very high Muslim population. Java island is known as the largest Muslim populated island in the world. There are close to 150 million people living on that island. I don't know how many the population is here in your country Canada, but you can compare just on that island, so many people. 90% of this population are Muslims. I am now living there, sent there by our local church to do reach these Muslims. Thank the Lord that since the year 2012, our federation was able to establish a new mission church on this island in Malang East Java. Recently we just baptized two new believers at this mission church. There was a lady from a strong Muslim background and a man from a pagan background. We are so happy with this young mission church, eventhough it is still a small church, it has members from many different countries (Indonesian, Canadian, American, Korean, East Timor, Malaysian), as well as members from many different tribes of Indonesia (From: Java, Kalimantan, Rote, Savu, Timor, Papua, Ambon and Sumba). Because of this multi culture and languages, every Sunday service, we preached in two languages, in Indonesian as well as in English. The church in Malang also serves as a home base for any of our members possibly studying for the ministry. I serve as their mentor, and also as mentor for the GGRI students who study in Malang.

Our federation is smaller compared to yours, but we don't see the size, we realize that the task of mission outreach is a very important calling of each of our local churches. We thank God for giving us the spirit and eagerness to keep reaching out the muslim and other unbelievers in Indonesia.

We don't have much funds, our federation is poor economically, but that does not become a stumbling block for us to keep reaching out. Now, we are hoping to reach out to the Muslim people in Celebes island. Since the year 2014, we have been able to visit and do some training and preaching in Banggai island, another muslim island. Last year we were able to reach out to the people in Palu and Kulawi of Middle Celebes as well as in Manado, North Celebes .

We thank God that since the year 2003 we were able to help your mission church in west Timor via Smithville church. We are so sorry to see that the mission work and cooperation somewhat disturbed because of the new federation that was recently established. We feel this happened without a good, open and honest discussion with us as brothers in the Lord. The agreement with Smithville church in the year 2003, was that after doing the work together with our federation, the result of the mission work of Smithville will be incorporated into our federation. We never thought and we never expected that some day after we agreed to work together in the mission field, there will be a new federation standing very close to us, only 2 minutes by car, as result of our cooperation in the mission field together...

We do not understand all of this, but the Lord knows and so we just leave it to the Lord. He knows what is and what is not true. In connection with this mission work cooperation, I do not need to repeat it here since your CRCA has given you a lengthy report.

Brothers, before I close this speech, I would like to let you know that in August 12th to 15th , this year, our federation plans to hold our next General Synod in Korlok, Rote Island. We have sent our letter of invitation to your CRCA, but through this opportunity, we would like let you know again and invite you through this Synod to please send some of your delegates to our upcoming General Synod.

It is our prayer that the Lord, our Covenant-keeping God, bless you and grant you His strength and wisdom – so that you may have a productive Synod for the up-building of God's Kingdom. May He also bless our relationship and use it for His name's sake. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Let me close this speech with a Psalm in Indonesian: Psalm 81.

TUHAN KAU KEKAL	BIMBING KAMI PUN	MARI BERSYUKUR
RAJA HATI KAMI	DALAM PERGUMULAN	DAN BERSUKARIA
KAMI TAK SESAL	AGAR BERTEKUN	ANGKAT LAH MAZMUR
IKUT FIRMAN MU	SAMPAI AKHIRNYA	BAGI ALLAH MU
BERIMAN TEGUH	DI TERANG BAKA	BIAR MUSIKMU
PADA JALAN DAMAI	KAMI PANDANG TUHAN	AGUNG DAN MERIAH

Brothers, you are our brothers, even though we are not sister church yet, we think and we believe that we are your brothers. And sooner or later we will see each other in heaven we will be seen as brothers. So now I am going to sit down, but my people said 'please bring something to you all', we don't have to many, but I just bring one to show that we all love you, so I am going to bring

this to amazing great chairman, I really learn from you brother chairman, so I cannot give to you all but I give to him, you can come down to my hometown and receive one. (Rev. Yonson Dethan honors the chairman with a gift, a shawl from Indonesia.)

Thank you for your wonderful welcome and hospitality. Thank you and be assured that we will continue to pray for you. May God richly bless you and the churches you serve. May He grant you all wisdom and strength in this pivotal and esteemed Synod.

May the Triune God bless you and keep you as churches, and may He keep us united in a sound church relationship to the glory of His Name. Thank you.

APPENDIX 10 – FRCA – Address of the Rev. Alkema of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Esteemed brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

On behalf of your brothers and sisters in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, your sister church down under, I pass on heartfelt greetings to you! Along with my colleague and friend, Rev. Richard Pot, I may share our delight in attending Synod Edmonton.

The bond between our respective federations is now our oldest and for many years has also been our closest. Paul declares in Philippians 1:3: I thank my God upon remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. While we are not close geographically, there has nevertheless been a wonderful fellowship in the gospel that we have experienced together for many years. Although the size of your federation is much larger, and your resources more extensive, we have enjoyed a close cooperation based on mutual respect and love in Christ for one another. On behalf of the Australian churches we wish to affirm the value we attach to our relationship and our desire not only to continue in it, but also where possible to strengthen it.

Cooperation

One wonders if two federations separated by such a distance have ever been as intricately and beautifully connected as we are. By way of example, of the 18 churches, church groups and mission posts in the FRCA, four are currently vacant. That leaves 13 ministers and 1 missionary of which 6 are Canadian, 12 have served in the Canadian churches, and 11 have been trained at the CRTS. This dynamic exists to some degree in reverse as well with Australian ministers in Canada as well as those who have served in congregations in Australia. We may expect that this inter-connectedness will continue, to our mutual benefit. We have been blessed in recent years with the efforts of numerous retired ministers from Canada coming to Australia and serving in either vacant congregations or congregations where ministers have been granted a sabbatical. The talents and gifts of these brothers, as well as their wisdom and insight, have been greatly appreciated. We have seen a continual and perhaps increasing stream of young people who travel to Canada and live in your midst, while at the same time we have welcomed your young people into our congregations and homes. We send young men to Hamilton to study at the CRTS, an institution that we continue to praise God for. In Papua New Guinea we work together in cooperation on the mission field alongside our mutual sister church, the RCNZ. Our bond together in the Lord is strong, and I can assure you that it is deeply cherished in Australia.

Growth and Maturity

The Lord continues to bless our churches with ongoing numeric growth and spiritual growth, including an increased desire to be an effective witness to the world around us. Coupled with this growth, in recent years we have also witnessed a certain maturing in our federation as we have considered ways to establish our own resources. There are two in particular that concern our relationship and that I would like to speak to: the adoption of an Australian version of the Book of Praise, as well as the consideration of the feasibility and desirability of establishing an Australian Theological Seminary. The maturing of a federation is a natural process. In your official reports, as well as your addresses to our most recent Synods in 2015 and 2018, it is clear that you recognise this development. It has also become apparent that you wish to tactfully acknowledge our independence while at the same time expressing your ongoing appreciation for the close links and cooperation we have.

Ever since Synod Armadale 2012, there has been discussion of and momentum towards the production an Australian version of the Book of Praise. Even though our recent synods have also accepted the changes implemented in your 2014 edition of your Book of Praise, for a long time there have been some small differences in what we have adopted for use in our churches. Examples include some minor differences in wording in our liturgical forms and confessions, and our own church order, and these simply reflect our own identity and context as a church federation in Australia. While we have tended to follow suit in accepting whatever changes your synods have adopted, we also have our own responsibility and character and thus for example if you accept new hymns it is not automatically a fait accompli that we would do the same. As a result, there has been a growing sense of the desirability of taking a more independent direction, the fruit of which is evident in the decision made at Synod Bunbury 2018 to move forward with the production of our own version of the Book of Praise. Yet what should be stressed is not the difference between our Books of Praise but the similarity. I share with you one of the grounds listed in our decision to move to the Australian version of the Book of Praise: “there is merit in keeping the Australian version of the Book of Praise as similar as possible to the Canadian Book of Praise so that they can be used interchangeably by the members, and so that our book closely resembles that used by our Canadian sister churches.” There remains a great desire in Australian to maintain this link with you. That you now face decisions with respect to the future content of the Book of Praise, as well as the adoption of other resources like the Trinity Hymnal, demonstrates that there may be a divergence in our paths in our books used in worship.

Our link with the Canadian Reformed Churches through the seminary in Hamilton has long been a very beneficial and powerful force in binding our churches together. I may assure you that your brothers and sisters in Australia continue to be very grateful to God for the ongoing functioning of the CRTS. We consider it a privilege to support the seminary that has been such a blessing to our churches for so many years, and are grateful for the active involvement our deputies can have in attending meetings of the Board of Governors. In many ways it is a beautiful partnership. Our investigation of the feasibility of establishing an Australian Theological Seminary has its origins in the mandate given to our Deputies for Theological Training at Synod Baldivis 2015. At our most recent synod the decision was taken not to pursue the establishment of an Australian seminary at this time. While there is some support in our churches for the establishment of an Australian seminary in the medium to long term, there remains a strong consensus in the churches that our connection with the CRTS should be maintained. I highlight the following grounds from our decision: “the churches have been very well served by the CRTS for many years, and the CRTS has demonstrated and is committed to continual improvement; the churches value the input and influence from the Canadian churches that comes via the ministers who are trained at the CRTS, [and] Australian students have historically benefited from the experience of studying overseas at the CRTS.” What we have mandated our deputies to do is to “develop and submit to our next synod a strategic long-term plan for a future Australian seminary” that will also be able to function within the broader Asian-Pacific region and the sister churches we have in the region. We do not know what the Lord has in store for us in this long-term planning, but rest assured that any developments that may emerge in the future will take into consideration our great appreciation for our link with the Canadian Reformed Churches through the CRTS. This includes accepting the recent invitation from the CRTS to participate in the work of the ad hoc committee investigating the possibilities for distance education with the CRTS.

Sister Church Relationships

You will be aware of the decision taken at our most recent Synod to terminate our sister relationship with the RCN. It was a decision made with a heavy heart, also with a view to the historic ties between our federations. Yet it was a unanimous decision made out of necessity, the culmination of a lengthy period in which calls for change and repentance were proven fruitless. We have seen in your interactions with the RCN in recent years the same concerns addressed and remain confident that our churches are of one mind in this matter. We continue to pray that the LORD would grant a change of heart and direction in the RCN, a bowing before the directives of Scripture that do not change and are not obscured over time and despite evolving cultural contexts, but transcend them in their clarity.

One of our newest sister church relationships is with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, established in 2015. We can report with thankfulness that our churches in an organic way are growing closer together. Our geographical closeness would seem to make such growing cooperation a natural development, yet we know it is still something we must both work at. We hope and pray that this increased cooperation and interaction may continue and that any obstacles that may hinder this dynamic should be resolved. It is for this reason that we are now working together with the RCNZ to resolve the differences between our Emeritus Fund and their counterpart so that the calling of each other's ministers may be facilitated. It may be that the issue we are facing here is one that applies in equal measure in your relationship with the RCNZ. The FRCA are grateful for the ongoing sister church relationship that we enjoy with the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI). We are privileged to be able to provide support and encouragement to our sister church, and seek to do that in an appropriate and beneficial way. However, we must be candid about the challenges we face not only in connection with the GGRI, but also the complex dynamics surrounding the other reformed federations in Indonesia. We have invested a significant amount of time and energy investing in the relationship with have with the GGRI, also in seeking a growing unity between the GGRI, GGRC and now as well the GGRI-Timor. Yet there are very real challenges in understanding the best way forward, taking into account the independence of the Indonesian churches and the cultural complexities that as Westerners we must be aware of. We believe that with respect to the Indonesian church federations, our respective deputyships can provide mutual help and support, and could benefit from being in closer contact. At our most recent Synod, our deputies were mandated to "monitor, evaluate and offer advice about troubling aspects of the church polity and liturgy in the GGRI". This was the result of serious concerns expressed by our deputies about a weakening of the Reformed character of the churches we are working with. We state that very humbly, also understanding our own weaknesses and shortcomings. Yet it is indicative of what we see as the need for a careful, thoughtful approach to the church federations in Indonesia. We urge you to be careful in your decision-making process concerning decisions about these relationships. We feel that it is important that you come to your own conclusions independently, and based on reliable first-hand information such as through visits.

We are blessed with sister church relationships also with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCCK), as well as the FRCSA (where the focus of our support has shifted from needy churches to theological education), as well as the First Evangelical Church of Singapore (FERC). It is our prayer that the Lord would continue to bless our relationships with these churches.

Exploring Potential Relationships

We are also blessed with the opportunity to explore future relationships with other churches. In Australia our deputies have been mandated to investigate the Southern Presbyterian Church (SPC) and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), two small federations in eastern Australia.

At our most recent Synod we were blessed to be able to welcome representatives from two of your domestic sister churches: the URCNA and the OPC. The faithfulness of the URCNA has been known to us for many years now in connection with their close sister church relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the ongoing efforts to achieve federative unity with you. Synod Bunbury gave our deputies the mandate: “to continue to liaise with the URCNA and to recommend to Synod Albany 2021 whether to proceed in establishing a sister church relationship”. This is a significant mandate, and we look forward to seeing how our relationship with the URCNA will develop.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) initiated contact with us at Synod Bunbury 2018, for which we are grateful. Deputies are mandated to seek further information and to report to our next Synod with a recommendation as to the feasibility of further ecumenical contact.

Closing

From across the ocean, we have seen an increasingly hostile opposition to Christianity develop in Canada: a political and cultural environment that is very different from that of 30 or 40 years ago. Also in Australia, there is a momentum in the movement away from Christian principles. More recently, the legalisation of homosexual marriage has altered the cultural direction of the country. Australia may not be as vehemently atheistic as Canada has increasingly become, but it is rapidly moving in the same direction. Yet through all this we are confident in Christ’s care and work in our churches and yours, and grateful for the ongoing relationship we share with you.

In 1 Samuel 23:16 we read that Jonathan, Saul’s son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. The NIV (1984) translates this as: helped him find strength in God. I love this verse. Two children of the Lord, united in the one, true faith, standing in the midst of great challenges and trials, but turning to the source of all strength and comfort: God Himself. What a beautiful picture of fellow children of God living in true communion! Your churches have challenges and hardships, as do ours. But we have the great privilege as sister churches of guiding, comforting and encouraging one another in our walk with the Lord. Your sister church in Australia encourages you in your desire to serve the Lord faithfully in all matters. May His care also allow us, as sister churches, to continue to enjoy the special relationship we have together in Him.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.

APPENDIX 11 – RCNZ – Address of the Rev. de Vos of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand

Dear brothers,

We formed a relationship with you in 2007 in your Senate of Smithers when our delegate Bruce Hoyt was there to see you and he must have done a good job, because I think you accepted us quite quickly after that, it was sort of, as you know, not a common thing. But last year in Palmerston North your delegates stood up and did a lovely presentation, but they reminded us that since 2007 they have been at every one of our synods, every three years and we have not yet been at one of yours and how would I say this... they were polite and gracious but they were direct enough to say: if you don't show up we're not sure what we're going to do in the future. Three years ago I was ready to fly out and that week I had been struggling with various things, within and without, some big pressures in ministry and personally and I had a breakdown. So I was not able to come, I felt a little bit like Epaphroditus, distressed because I wanted to be there and I wanted to greet you all and couldn't, so this is a wonderful opportunity.

I want to thank you for your invitation your lovely hospitality. I've enjoyed meeting you, talking to you, you're just like us! Even my accent's like yours, so isn't that nice, so you're just like us. Also warm greetings from the Reformed churches of New Zealand. We esteem you, we esteem your strength, I think we share many of those strengths and we want to learn from you as well and we can! So it's a real blessing to be here finally and it's good. So thank you so much. You've discovered already I'm not a Kiwi, my wife is, so if you want to hear a true Kiwi accent talk to her. But be careful because the Kiwi accent has just been voted the most sexy accent in the world, so don't talk to her too much ... I'm not just kidding.

Those things have been said already: in Syria I did meet Jack and Jerry this year and they were real standbys there. We formed a ministers fraternal and I really have always appreciated them. They were friendly, they were supportive, we appreciate them and the fellowship with them.

I'm currently serving in Hamilton New Zealand. It's an agricultural city of about a hundred thousand people, an hour and a half south of Auckland. Around our city we are in the prime agricultural region of New Zealand, just a half an hour from Hobbiton, so if you like Lord of the Rings... Our provincial area is home to 2,000,000 dairy cows and half a million people, so we are a dairy farming country. We export 90 percent of our dairy products to Asia etc (the Canadians and Americans don't like us too much for that reason, no just kidding...)

The entire land area of New Zealand is the equivalent to that of Colorado. Our population is roughly the same size as Colorado, four million people. By the way my brothers from Australia did a lovely job and it's been great getting to know them, it's been a lovely relationship performing with their churches, but I want to inform you the Sydney Harbour Bridge does not connect Australia to New Zealand yet. If you're premillennial however the New Jerusalem would fit just between our two countries. Our country has many similarities to Canada, very much the way brother Agema spoke. In New Zealand we live in a truly post Christian culture. Evangelism is difficult as it is in Canada, however the Lord has brought immigrants to us. In the last years in New Zealand I believe we have 50,000 immigrants a year coming. Just an example, lately in our church on Sunday mornings we're having something like 35, perhaps 35, visitors just coming to us. We had a young man, he milks on a goat milking farm; Kiwi; New Zealander, true New Zealander; rough and tough and his wife he listens to Paul Washer on the internet, shows up in our church on a Sunday morning. He says: 'I had to find a Reformed Church. And they've been

growing and coming ever since, it's been a true blessing. So God and some way is bringing people into the church through various means. The Christchurch mosque attack was a big deal. The Muslim call to prayer was broadcast on our public radio and TV stations and in Parliament. And our Parliament had just been debating throwing out all prayer and then they're broadcasting the Muslim call to prayer so it was a big deal in New Zealand.

Just a little history and I'm not going to go too long I hope but a little history in New Zealand, just to make it a little interesting. New Zealand's a very young country. The Polynesian adventurers who came from above us, from Asia. The birds, with no mammals and so the bird sounds were amazing. But to our knowledge the first white man to discover New Zealand was the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman in 1642. And if you just put the first slide on, look at those guys there, those are the Maori drawn by the artist on Tasman's ship the 'Zeehaan'. Look at the muscles and you wonder why we're the best rugby players in the world you know, look at that! That's amazing! That is now called Golden Bay, but when Abel Tasman arrived there he called it 'Moordenaars Bay' now why? Look at that, see them? See above, those are the Maori in the canoes and the Dutchmen, they got in their canoes and hit them over the head. Grabbed one and took him back to shore, and to our knowledge the first white person to be cooked and eaten in New Zealand was the Dutchman! I kid you not, and that's actually recorded in our official history of New Zealand. So it gives you a really good idea. But isn't that amazing, that this is all drawn from Abel Tasman's ship and that gives you a little bit of an idea of Tasmania as well, named after Tasman obviously. So if it wasn't for this murder, this incident where one of his ship's men were taken we probably can say there's the reason no one showed up over a hundred years. Until Cook came and he claimed it for New Zealand. So that's the history. They didn't land because it was a place of murderers 'Moordenaars Bay'. It's now Golden Bay, so kind of an interest in history.

The missions to Maori were very interesting in the beginning as well, I've got another slide about that just in a moment, but I'll just give an example. In our area there was a mission school in the turn of the century, the 1800s, after 1850, and there was a little girl in that mission school named Tarori, that's how the Maori would say Tarori. And she was given a gift for learning the Bible. And the gift was a Gospel of Luke and she put this little Gospel of Luke, or I think the Maori would say Rook, in a little katie basket she wore on her neck and this was her prize for learning English and learning the Bible. She was 12 and her family were traveling very close to us, Wairere Falls, we could get there in 45 minutes. They were camped there and a warrior from another tribe killed her, because he wanted that thing in her basket around her neck. So he stuck that gospel of Luke, ripped it off her neck, killed her, but he couldn't read, so what do you do? So he waited until some guy came around to his tribe and this guy could read. So he says could you read this to me. What do you know: 'What have I done? I've sinned.' He became a believer and then other tribes began to get a hold of this book and this Gospel of Luke begins to go to the tribes and through her martyrdom Christianity grows and begins to spread in New Zealand through that book. And that'll bring us, I'll just show you, she is actually buried very close to us, again not far away, not even an hour's drive. Age 12. The gospel of saint Luke brought peace, through the martyrdom of this girl. There's a beautiful Christian history of missions in New Zealand a really beautiful history.

And then I want to go to sit a little bit into the Reformed churches. When the Reformed churches came in the 1950s the Dutch Reformed people initially worshiped in the Presbyterian churches of New Zealand. But they soon discovered that the Westminster Confession sort of wasn't held by a lot of the Presbyterians, so they actually began to worship on their own. They were helped by Dutch missionary ministers who came to help and so forth. But you do get the picture a little bit. Our churches are unique, in the sense that when you come to Canada you come to a place like Edmonton, you could pick a Reformed church somewhere, you've got a lot of choice. Protestant Reformed, I know there's one in Lacombe. When you come to New Zealand, we're the Reformed Church! So you don't get a choice really, you either join the Reformed Church or you don't. And that's why our churches are a bit of a different blend. Some of our churches are a little bit like free Reformed churches of Australia, some of our churches are like a Canadian Reformed Church here. A number of our churches will be much more like a URCNA. So we've got a variety, different blends of churches. Our ministers are trained at Mid-America seminary. Our ministers are trained at the Reformed Theological Seminary of Geelong Melbourne, some of our ministers are from Greenville Seminary, some of our ministers are from Westminster seminary. In fact, a young man was just ordained from Westminster, a very fine preacher. So we're a bit of a different blend, we're a bit of a mongrel, maybe a reformed mongrel. We're a different blend but it's quite unique, it's quite different. We are the only reformed churches in New Zealand in that respect. However there is one Netherland's Reformed in Carterton.

The Reformed Church of New Zealand were the first churches, or among the first churches, that I know of to subscribe to both the three forms of unity and the Westminster Confession. Jack's lawyer calls this the glorious experiment in an essay called 'Confident of better things'. Is there a problem with this subscription to the four forms? No, I think it has worked well for our churches. We are very thankful to the Lord that in our churches we are in good heart. At our last Synod we sang from our new 'Sing to the Lord' Psalter hymnal. Our 'Sing to the Lord' is probably a little bit like the new Trinity Psalter Hymnal. I think that our 'Sing to Lord' is probably a little superior. No I shouldn't say that (laughter). Our 'Sing to the Lord' is probably a little more, we probably have a few more modern psalm tunes. Maybe psalm renderings and probably more hymn selection. Which can be a blessing, can be a problem. I read some of your material, but it has worked out very well for our churches. It's on our website, you can see it. I think this songbook has been really well received and really beautiful.

At our last ministers and wives conference, our churches after every synod, the year after Synod, we have a ministers and wives conference. And that means that ministers and their wives, we go to a conference for a week and we have a speaker come, not from our ministerial, from outside. It's a real blessed time of fellowship but I think at the last conference I think over half our ministerial Corps was under 40 and I'm starting to look really old. But that's a good thing. As the brothers said we have 21 churches. We have various church plants and that's a blessing for us. Here we go, that's New Zealand. (Points to slide) There we are: North Island, South Island, gives you an idea of our churches. There's Auckland. You can see Hamilton there. There's one more by Christchurch, one more Church. Gives you a little bit of an idea. We're really spread through most of New Zealand so we've been blessed. We're spread there and the gospel is growing in many of our churches for which we are thankful.

Like you we have a challenge with our covenant youth. We linked for schools and we've also had issues with churches and schools rejecting government support. Which has been unfortunate

because schools that have rejected government support, have largely gone under. And schools that accepted government support have largely done quite well, even able to set their own agenda. I'm not going to get into that one, but schools have generally not flourished too well in New Zealand.

We want to thank you wholeheartedly for the cooperation you have with us on the foreign mission field in Papua New Guinea. We had a senior minister there, he was there for 10 years and he has had a breakdown he had to leave and you have filled in for him. It's a real blessing to us, so we thank you so much that we can work together on the mission field in PNG and it's been a true blessing to us and our churches. Our own congregation has people who are in PNG flying for MAF. This man's wife flies for Mission Aviation Fellowship. The New Zealand people give generously and sacrificially to the work of the ministry and to the work of missions. Sometimes I found in North America people give generously, but sometimes they give of their excess. And I think a New Zealand, it's fair to say, people give very sacrificially for the church. Very generously, so we're very thankful for that.

I just want to say one last thing, hope I gave you a little bit of understanding of our churches. Who we are, where we come from. A little bit of history. I worry sometimes for the future, I know we shouldn't worry but you know 35 years ago I lived in Holland for a semester, I studied there. I attended a 'Vrijgemaakte' Church. They were a lot like you are today and I guess my question is: what's going to stop you from being like them in 35 years? Well, what's going to stop New Zealand from being like that in 35 years? How do I know New Zealand will be faithful, will my children be under faithful ministry and preaching? That's a concern, I wish I had an answer for us. I wish I did you know, it'd be really nice. I would give you the answer and we know that in 35 years we and you are faithful. I think that we have to look at ourselves, as brothers have said here yesterday and today. We have to examine our own lives and hearts and plead with the Lord to help us. To strengthen us, to remain faithful.

I'm just going to read these words to you because I think the Word of God is speaking to us here and I love the way the word says in Jude, I just preached through Jude a little while ago, where it says: 'But you must remember beloved, the predictions of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you in the last time there will be scoffers following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions. Worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.' And then it says in the Word of God and this is my last words to you: 'But you beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. Brothers, that's my prayer for you. And please may that be your prayer for us. That we may keep ourselves in the love of God, waiting and hoping for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks for your hospitality, it has been a real blessing to be here with you all.

APPENDIX 12 – URCNA – Address of the Rev. Pols of the United Reformed Churches in North America

Dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ, Greetings on behalf of the United Reformed Churches in North America.

I am honoured to be invited to speak to you as a fraternal delegate of the United Reformed Churches in North America. I am also representing our Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity. I am currently not a member of our (CERCU) committee, but have greatly enjoyed my work on this committee in the past. I found the frequent interaction and cooperation with brothers from the Canadian Reformed Churches to be of special value, especially during nine years on our Joint Church Order Committee. The CanRC and URC brothers on this committee got to know and appreciate each other very well. We enjoyed rich cooperation and fellowship.

I have also served the URC in Edmonton over many years, with your (now retired) colleagues and dear brothers Richard Aasman and Bill Slomp near by. So I speak to you as more than an official representative. I am happy to be with you as one who feels a deep kinship and love for you and your churches, many of whose members I've come to know over the years. My son married a girl who had Rev. Slomp as her pastor in Neerlandia years ago. In fact her son and daughter recently had the same 1st grade teacher that she had as a little girl.

I hope this experience can illustrate the progress made over the years toward coming together. On an official level there have been setbacks and disappointments to that progress. I will not rehearse that history here now. I would rather observe that when movement toward union by official decision slows or stalls, that does not mean that progress on a necessary, and perhaps deeper level, comes to an end.

Here locally, there has been a rich and growing cooperation in Christian education, bringing our kids, teachers, and families together. Attending conferences and joint activities by our youth has been on the rise. The annual conference in Sumas, Washington has been great for brotherly (and sisterly) love and trust in each other. The concurrent classes held over the pasts few years is also an advance forward.

The very fact that you will be devoting time to considering the use of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal indicates the impact that our actual proximity to one another has. We think about each other. We interact with each other. We influence each other. By the gracious, sovereign government of the Head of the church, we have come closer to each other. It remains to be seen where it will lead, but we ought to be prayerful and positive about it, with thanksgiving.

By way of information, it may be useful to briefly highlight some developments at our synod, held in Wheaton, Illinois last June. In general, it is clear that over the past years the URC churches have grown together as a federation. We are learning to work more efficiently together on this broad level, and enjoy a very good spirit of brotherly love at our synods, which have met every two years now since 2010.

We continue to struggle together over the best way to cooperate in the work of foreign missions and church planting. We have a full time missions coordinator, appointed in 2016, and re-appointed in 2018, to promote informed support of URC missions, assisting churches, and being an encouragement to missionaries. Synod did not approve overtures to add another missions coordinator, which would have split the work load of coordinating domestic and foreign missions. Synod did approve adding members to our federation Missions Committee, and

mandated the Missions Committee to investigate the current OPC model and the older CRC model for their missionary endeavours, to see if they are feasible for the URC to use for our missionary endeavours, and if so to make specific recommendations for how we can do this. As we wrestle over methods of cooperation, we are thankful for growing interest and desire to work together, not only in foreign missions, but also in church planting and pursuing local evangelism. Biennial ministers' and mission conferences also bear witness to that.

Synod Wheaton last year approved a Doctrinal Affirmation in response to numerous overtures indicating a desire to have Synod make a clear statement concerning the institution of marriage. These sixteen affirmations on the positive, biblical view of marriage and sexuality were adopted without dissent. Given the upheaval we are witnessing in our culture and legal structures on this issue, this was judged to be a timely and important testimony. They have been published on the URC federation website. In view of possible legal challenges as well as our witness to the world, perhaps some joint or shared testimony as federations could be of value (I say this knowing that approving "Doctrinal Affirmations" might be viewed by some as stepping on the top of a slippery :-)).

Regarding our relationship to the CanRCs as sister churches, 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. I understand that this has taken place in the past few years.

Although we are further removed from the close ties you have had with the Reformed Churches in Netherlands (GKv), we also grieve with you over their doctrinal decline. It was with sorrow that our past synod voted without dissent to discontinue our Ecumenical Contact relationship with these churches due to the RCN's decision to open all church offices to women, regardless of our repeated admonition. You are at a critical juncture in addressing this same issue at this synod. Sometimes we must stand together in our rejection of error as well as our embrace of the truth.

Our ongoing pursuit of unity was also addressed at a joint meeting of our respective unity committees in November, 2018, in conjunction with NAPARC in Philadelphia. This meeting reflected back over the past 2 decades of unity talks. (We may also recognize the extensive and faithful labour of men like Pim Den Hollander, John Bouwers and others over these years). Much positive ground has been gained, evident in pulpit exchanges, interim preaching assignments, shared schools, Streetlight Ministries in Hamilton, the Anchor Association, and desire for the Trinity Psalter Hymnal to be used in the churches. It was observed that matters of church order are possibly the largest remaining hurdle in the path of our relationship with each other. This does not mean that all of us in the URCNA agree with the notion that Canadian Reformed Church polity (reflected in the Proposed Joint Church Order) indicates that you are somewhat hierarchical. Hopefully we will yet arrive at a better understanding of the minor differences in our church order. It was agreed to discuss remaining points of concern on church polity at the next meeting, to be held this year.

Just recently (last week, May 9) a CanRC/URC unity meeting was held in Grace URC of Dunnville at which there was frank interchange of thoughts on the state of our relationship, with various suggestions for the way forward. There are yet real differences between us (the different ways our synods meet is obviously a big one). There are also perceptions about these differences

as to their significance. We cannot overcome the real differences without growing clarity and understanding about their nature.

As to the work of this synod, you are facing the far reaching significance of dealing with overtures for the adoption of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal for use in your churches. Having perused the letters from your churches on this matter, it is clear that this may be no easy matter to address.

It has been less than a year since the Trinity Psalter Hymnal (TPH) has been published. Most of the churches of our Classis Western Canada have been using the new song book since last summer. The percentage of churches in the United Reformed Churches as a whole that have transitioned to the new book is over 90%, according to an estimate by a member of the Song Book Committee.

The response of the churches using the new book has been overall very positive. This is certainly the case in Cornerstone URC of Edmonton, and I hear similar reports of sister churches in Alberta and beyond. Without presuming to advise you on this, let me share some observations that I hope may be useful:

1. The extensive indices of songs according to topic, first lines, and Scripture references provide a very helpful way of selecting appropriate songs for sermon themes and texts. There are also many choices for special occasions and special services. As one who frequently leads services in Canadian Reformed Churches, I found this greater selection of songs in the Trinity Psalter Hymnal to be an advantage for ministers who want to find that perfect song to go with their sermon.
2. The Psalm renditions are numbered in order, corresponding to the Psalms, with letters (A, B, C) when there is more than one rendering. This is familiar to you from your Book of Praise, but it is a very helpful change for us, and a valuable aid to learning the content of specific Psalms.
3. Many of the Psalm renditions are more faithful to the text of Scripture and more complete in covering the whole Psalm than in the blue Psalter Hymnal we are familiar with. URC churches are also committed together to giving priority to the Psalms in our worship (as in our Church Order Article 39). This means that we should sing more Psalms than hymns. I personally have maintained this in my song selections since we began using the Trinity Psalter Hymnal. It often means choosing Psalm renditions that are unfamiliar and challenging to pick up, but this promotes good learning. It is also noteworthy that many of the songs that were previously in the Psalm section of our old Psalter Hymnal have been moved to the Hymn section in the new. What this means is that many of our hymns are clearly based on Psalms, or segments of Psalms.
4. The large hymn section includes many hymns that have a rich history in solid Presbyterian churches. Depending on the breadth of our appreciation for non-Dutch branches of the Reformational, Confessional tree, this may be valued as an enrichment of our fellowship and appreciation for our brothers and sisters in the English speaking world. There is also an experiential emphasis in many such hymns which is Biblical and God-centred, as opposed to sentimental. Use of these treasures may also enhance our expression of the deep emotional side of our common faith.
5. It is challenging for our churches to learn many of the new tunes for the Psalms and hymns (many of them Geneva tunes more familiar to you). Often the older we are, the

more difficult such changes can be. Some of our elderly have also observed that the print of the TPH is quite light (and the books are heavier). It is also gratifying to see the interest and evident delight of children and young people over the new songs in the TPH, some of which they had already been singing in their (CanRef!) Christian school. Indeed it also requires dedication and commitment from accompanist to learn them and lead us in singing. We found that they rise to the challenge and find it a pleasure to use the new song book.

Brothers, we enjoy a tremendous heritage together. The confessions and history that unite us in a common Reformed Faith makes us closer to each other than many churches that may share the same denominational name. Not only that, I trust that you will agree that the more we get to know brothers and sisters in the faith, the more we discover how alike we are when it comes to the basic struggles and experiences of the Christian life. As observers to our respective classes, some of you can testify that this common faith is brought out especially in executive sessions, or in reports of church visitors. Sin and weakness looks and acts the same in Canadian Reformed as it does in United Reformed people. Delinquencies follow the similar patterns. Ministers and elders face the same problems and stresses. They make the same kinds of mistakes. Elders show the same strengths and weaknesses. Preachers face the same kinds of criticisms, and commit the same kinds of sins.

What is yet more important is that the grace of God in Christ is the same. You see it in brothers humbly trying to do the right thing according to the Scriptures. You hear it in the respectful consultation and debates carried out by conscientious men. It is unmistakable in the prayers and Christ-centred comforts and helps that we resort to. It is this unity in the Spirit that makes us so much alike. We really see it and feel it when we get beneath the surface distinctions.

We all sense a growing darkness in the culture and world around us. Our interactions with the people of this world make us feel that we exist in different worlds in our minds. We may sometimes fear for our children or grandchildren as we see the pressures and temptations they face, or wonder what may become of our religious freedoms in this land. These considerations add to the preciousness of our unity in Christ. May they also increase our will to express and practice this unity in faith, and obedience to our Lord.

I close with the words of Psalm 65:4, extolling God for the blessedness we share by His sovereign grace: “Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, That he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple.”

May God bless your deliberations to the well-being of the churches and the glory of His name.

APPENDIX 13 – ARPC – Address by the Rev. Bill Barron of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church

Fathers and Brethren and other distinguished guests:

I bring you greetings from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of the United States and Canada. We rejoice in your ongoing work and faithfulness to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our fellowship through NAPARC has opened a door of interaction over the last couple of years that we seek to advance.

We are an old denomination in the United States, officially organized in 1782. Our roots go back to Scotland. We descend from the Associate or Succession Church of 1733. Notable men such as Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine were key in that movement. And from the Reformed Church or Covenanters led by Robert Cameron in 1743. Due to persecution in Scotland, many came to the new world. In 1782, many of these congregations united to form the Associate Reformed Church. In 1803, the Synod of the Carolinas and Georgia was formed and then it became an independent Synod 19 years later in 1822. We now have 10 presbyteries in the US and Canada with a total membership of just over 30,000. Currently, we have 275 churches and 42 mission churches. Our goal is to establish 6 new congregation each year. Right now we are averaging a little over 3 per year.

In 25 days, we will begin our General Synod meeting which will be a concurrent synods meeting with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. This will be our second such meeting. In 2015, the RPCNA accepted our invitation to meet with us at Bonclarken. This year we are accepting their invitation to meet at Geneva College.

I mentioned, Bonclarken, is our denominational conference grounds. In 1920, our forefathers had the wisdom to purchase a 63 acre estate containing a massive home and Heidelberg Gardens in Flat Rock, N.C. – about 30 miles from Asheville. The old home still stands and is used as the center of the conference work. In the last few years, Bonclarken has moved to year round operations and is used by groups far beyond the ARP connection. Joni and Friends is one group that has held their meeting with us for a number of years. We are finishing up the process of renovating almost all of the facilities. One exciting event that takes place at Bonclarken each spring is called “work week.” It is a time when volunteers converge on the grounds for a week of deep cleaning, food, fellowship, food, worship, and food. My wife and I have had the privilege of being a part of this week for the last few years. It is amazing what 160 or so volunteers can do in a week.

In 1837, the ARP entered into the higher education arena with the establishment of Erskine Theological Seminary and then in 1839 Erskine College. In the second half of the 20th century, we found our denomination and schools drifting down the neo-orthodox path. But starting in 1979, we stopped that drift and entered on the difficult and often rocky path of recovering our Reformation values. The seminary is now the graduate school of the college. Under the leadership of our College President Dr. Rob Gustafson, we have seen the school make tremendous advances. The current freshman enrollment will result in more freshmen on campus than upperclassmen. The goal of the new 5 year plan is to move from about 600 students to 1000 (1200 maximum). Erskine is a Christian liberal arts schools and is working to make sure we maintain that distinctive. The 5 year plans calls for a number of exciting new programs the re-establishment of a football team after almost 70 years. (last played in 1952) It has been common

to see bumper stickers or tee shirts saying: “Erskine football, undefeated for 50 years, 60 years.” I am sure that is soon to end!

Camp Joy is a ministry of our Church that is celebrating its 40th year of operation this year. It is a ministry to mentally handicapped individuals who are given the opportunity to experience a wide variety of activities including worship, Bible study, and recreation. Each camper has a “buddy” assigned to them 24/7 for the week. It is really hard to say who gains the most, the camper, the camper’s family with a little reprieve, or the “buddy” who will never be the same. Camp Joy has grown from one conference to 9: 4 at Bonclarken, 2 in Florida, and one each in South Carolina, Virginia, and the Memphis area.

Foreign missions has been a major emphasis of the ARP from its early days. Traditionally, we had 2 mission fields: Pakistan and Mexico. Each of these countries now have an independent ARP denomination of over 100,000 members. Currently, we have missionaries in about 20 countries. A new field is being opened called “Bridge Europe.” The focus is to work with refugees. It is being manned by experienced missionaries who have either finished their previous deployment or have been forced to relocate.

Thank you for the privilege of being with you for this meeting of your Synod. Thanks for the fellowship and hospitality. And thank you for the opportunity to tell you a little bit about the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

APPENDIX 14 – CRTS - Address by the Rev. Dr. den Hollander

Dear brothers assembled for Synod, brothers and sisters here present, and those watching the livestream, including my family, and my church family in Langley,

Last week Wednesday I was returning from a two-week tour of Jordan and Israel, which I hosted along with my wife Diane. As we were in transit, I received an email from Rev. Richard Aasman to give him a call when I had an opportunity. When we were back on home soil, I did call him, and he informed me of Synod's decision to accept the recommendation of the Board of Governors and appoint me to the professorship in New Testament at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. At that point the appointment was still confidential, but he warned me that it would go public as soon as I was off the phone with him and he had a chance to call Rev. Agema.

We live in a day when news travels quickly (not least because of the live-stream), so it was only a matter of some minutes before the messages started pouring in, starting with the family Whatsapp chats, and continuing via text messages, and emails. Since then answering them all has been almost a full-time job.

I've been overwhelmed by the appointment. While it did not come as a surprise because the process has been going on for over a year, when the moment came, I was still overwhelmed. I'm both humbled and honoured by your decision to appoint me to this position, and I feel its weight and responsibility. I recognize the important place our seminary has for our federation and beyond, and so I do not take this appointment lightly.

I have discovered abundantly in my ministry that I am not at all sufficient for the tasks that God has placed before me. But I have sought and found comfort and encouragement in the words of our Saviour to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). I accept this appointment to be professor of New Testament at the seminary, therefore, not because I feel particularly equipped for it, but because I know that the power of Christ is sufficient for all things.

I also rest in God's perfect will and his perfect plans. I have seen his guiding hand throughout the years leading up to this point, and trust in his continued care and providence. When I submitted the final draft of my doctoral dissertation in 2012, I closed off the acknowledgements at the beginning with words from Scripture, Proverbs 16:9, "The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps."

I have seen that reality throughout my life. I wasn't one of those who wanted to be a minister from a young age. In fact, my earliest recollection of a career choice was when I was about six or seven and I planned to be a robber. Thankfully that never materialized. When it came time in high school to consider the future, I had plans to pursue criminal law. I enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts in Classical Studies simply because I enjoyed history and thought the training in Latin might be useful for jurisprudence.

It was my third-year Greek translation course that introduced me to the world of Josephus studies. My instructor was an expert in Josephus and decided that in this course on Greek historians we should translate some of his writings. I never looked back. I continued on with a Master of Arts degree without any set plan for a career path. After that was complete, I wasn't really finished with studying and so I continued on with a PhD.

As I proceeded with my PhD, my plan was to pursue a professorship at university. But in my final year of study I was granted a course directorship of a fourth-year course, of my own design. That was, in many respects, the ideal course for a professor, the highest undergraduate level and the subject matter most suited to my research. Yet, while I enjoyed teaching about the Jews in the Roman world, I found myself wanting to share a message of greater consequence, of eternal consequence. That's when I floated the idea of seminary to my wife, Diane. She supported me unflinchingly, even though she had already endured seven years as the wife of a student. So it was that I defended my dissertation in August of 2012, and entered seminary less than a month later.

This isn't meant to be a complete history of my life, but an indication of the ways in which God guides and directs our paths, sometimes along pathways that we never conceived. When we see his direction in the past, it helps us entrust our future to him too. I see how he's placed this calling before me as well, and I recognize its weight. I understand the importance of the seminary to our churches. The task of training young men to preach the good news of Jesus Christ is a tremendous responsibility. I pray fervently and will continue to do so that God will use my passion for Jesus Christ, my love for the churches, and the gifts and talents he's given to me, for his glory and for the benefit of his church.

I want to use this opportunity to give thanks. Above all, I give thanks to my God, who called me out of the darkness into his marvellous light and has given me the privilege of proclaiming his excellencies (1 Peter 2:9). To God alone belongs all glory.

I have also seen his grace and love in and through those he's given to me. I thank my wife, Diane, for her sacrificial love and unwavering support, also with regard to this appointment. Thank you, Diane, for being my strongest encourager and my dearest friend. I thank our boys, Gabriel and Silas, who bring much joy but also keep me humble.

Thank you to both sets of parents, Den Hollanders and Boots, who have always been supportive and provided steady encouragement. The fact that two preacher's kids followed in their father's footsteps is a testimony to the passion and love for the church we saw in his example. Thank you, Dad, for demonstrating the beauty of the calling.

I want to thank the Langley congregation as well. The mixed feelings I have regarding this appointment are almost entirely due to the wonderful place you have given me, and us as family, in your midst. I have found great joy in pointing you to Christ in my preaching, teaching, and visiting, and have been so grateful for the ways in which you have responded to my ministry. Whatever benefit I have been to you is a testimony to the power of the Holy Spirit.

I treasure also the friendship I've formed with Doug, my co-pastor. God has richly blessed our relationship and our ministry together. Thank you, Doug, for your friendship, your many prayers, and your wise counsel. It has been a real privilege and joy to serve alongside you and I look forward to the time we have remaining.

My final thank you is to Dr. Visscher. He has been more than a mentor to me. He has been a close friend. Thank you, Jerry. You always treated me more as a colleague than as a student and I've benefited greatly from our conversations together. It was special to be busy with you this past year in planning the latest conference and in co-editing the book that will be published in due time. I consider it a great honour to be your successor in this position.

Lord willing, I'll take up my calling at the seminary in September 2020. That means I will become the colleague of four men who were my professors a few years ago. I have a great deal

of respect for them and have grown significantly from their instruction and example. To serve alongside them now is a privilege. The fact that they aren't holding any of my shenanigans as student against me is a testimony to their graciousness.

Let me end by addressing you, brothers assembled for Synod. You are entrusting me with an important task. You do this knowing something of my strengths, but perhaps little of my weaknesses. Please pray that in this calling God would use this jar of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to me (2 Cor. 4:7). Please pray that in my teaching, mentoring, and preaching I would proclaim not myself but Jesus Christ as Lord, and myself as servant for Jesus' sake (2 Cor. 4:5). May all our work bring glory to God alone!

APPENDIX 15 – CRTS – Letter from the Rev. Dr. Visscher

Dear members of Synod,

Let me begin by expressing great appreciation for the decision whereby you agreed to the appointment of Rev. Dr. William den Hollander to the New Testament chair. Already as a student, Dr. den Hollander – and he did come to us with that title – distinguished himself, exempt from some courses, ably assisting me in teaching others, and very willingly learning whatever he needed yet to learn in all the disciplines of theology. His Ph.D. on Josephus and the Greco-Roman world uniquely equips him to do very well what other NT professors can only attempt to do in a limited fashion: understand the NT in the light of its original background. This makes him truly a “rare find” among NT scholars, who will greatly enhance the work and teaching at CRTS. It makes it easier for me to retire, knowing that I will be so ably replaced.

Secondly, allow me to say that my years at CRTS have had their own challenges – first, with the work of completing a Ph.D., then becoming Principal shortly thereafter, and all the while serving as the professor of New Testament. Those 9.5 years of being Principal will probably be remembered best as years in which CRTS became accredited through the Association of Theological Schools, a process through which I was happy to give leadership. While it was not clear to us at the outset that this was a necessary process, it should be clear to us today that it was and still is. For example, shortly after having received accreditation status, the federal and provincial governments tightened the regulations that govern the admission of foreign students into Canada; without our new status, it would have been very difficult for CRTS to receive this approval – something I write more about in our upcoming 50th anniversary book. More recently, one of our graduates applied for NT graduate study to four prestigious British schools, including Cambridge and Oxford. We have been delighted to learn that he was admitted not just to one, but to all four! This was due not only to his ability, or to my recommendations, but also no doubt to our new accredited status. Thankfully, our graduates have often been able to gain admission to other schools, but now these doors open easier and more readily to CRTS graduates. What is really the best of all, however, is that the accreditation process has led us to become more self-reflective and critical of almost all aspects of the work at CRTS, and this has allowed us to deliver the programs in a more professional and satisfactory manner. Without ever compromising on our Reformed commitments, the track that Synod Smithers 2007 set us on has led to a greatly enhanced CRTS today. Suitably so, no doubt, as only the best is good enough in the service of our great King and Lord.

Meanwhile, in the NT department, it was my joy to teach students as much as possible regarding the New Testament Scriptures, and the areas of hermeneutics, textual criticism, exegesis, the Greek language, background, and content of the New Testament. In all this, I readily admit my own failings and shortcomings; it was not always possible to do everything that one desired to do and ought to have done, no doubt. If nothing else, it is my prayer that the students I taught throughout these 18 years so far, have been given a deep appreciation for the Scriptures, the approach needed to handle them rightly, and the love for our triune God which should always govern our interpretation and proclamation of his Word.

I would be remiss if I would not thank all those who supported me through this process – my colleagues, the staff, all those who served on the Board during those years. You saw my foibles, sometimes encountered my moments of exasperation, and know my weaknesses. I hope that, by the grace of God, you have seen a few strengths as well. Most of all, I thank my wife Teny and

our children who put up with a husband and father who for almost forty years now has been preoccupied with the work for the churches and the seminary of the churches. I hope you're all willing to to put up with me a little longer, as we give a young man time to begin the task, and an older man time to wind down. In the summer of 2020, DV, both of us will need to adjust to the new realities that will accompany new stages of calling in the service of our wonderful Lord and King. May He be praised!

I wish you God's blessing in the remainder of your deliberations.

APPENDIX 16 – OPC – Address prepared by the Rev. J. Sawyer of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Fathers and brothers, delegates of Synod, fellow fraternal delegates and observers, assembled guests, those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. John Calvin wrote to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in April of 1552 the following: “Amongst the greatest evils of our century must be counted the fact that the churches are so divided one from another that there is scarcely even a human relationship between us; at all events there is not the shining light of that holy fellowship of the members of Christ, of which many boast in word, but which few seek sincerely indeed. In consequence, because the members are torn apart, the body of the church lies wounded and bleeding. So far as I have it in my power, if I am thought to be of any service, I shall not be afraid to cross ten seas for this purpose, if that should be necessary.”

Perhaps it is one of the few things I have in common with John Calvin, but in the kind providence of our Lord, having crossed the Pacific ocean 22 times and 8 other seas and Oceans, it is my very great privilege to be among you in order to bring you Christian greetings in behalf of my church family in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We are thankful to acknowledge your comradeship in the faith once for all delivered to the Saints and thank you for the fellowship which we enjoy with you through numerous personal and ecclesiastical connections.

The OPC is about to celebrate the 83rd anniversary of her founding on June 11th 1936. In 1935 Prof. J. Gresham Machen, prominent Presbyterian Church leader and Professor of New Testament and founder of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, was deposed from the ministry of the PCUSA for his refusal to obey unscriptural demands by the hierarchy of the church. This hierarchy insisted on his support for an agenda of unbelief then being promoted at home and on the mission field. In 1936, during the height of the Great Depression, 5000 souls, out of a church of millions, separated themselves, along with those ministers and elders who had been deposed along with Machen. In 1936, in order to return to the Word of the Lord and establish a truly Presbyterian Church, a brave little group convened in Philadelphia as the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America. (Later being sued by the PCUSA over the use of the name PCA our fathers having little or no money to contend a lawsuit, surrendered the name PCA and would become the OPC in 1939)

Now 83 years later and still preserved in the faith of our fathers as a self consciously Reformed and Confessional Presbyterian Church, the OPC consists of 16 Presbyteries in the USA and Canada. There are over 300 churches and mission works, of which the median size is between 75-80 members. There are approximately 500 ministers and teachers, 1000 ruling elders, and 800 deacons, serving slightly over 31,000 souls who constitute the communicant and non-communicant membership of the church.

The OPC continues to be vitally committed to the work of worldwide outreach through denominational ministry in Foreign Missions, Home Missions, and Christian Education.

OPC missionaries have been active on foreign fields from Uruguay to Uganda to the Ukraine, from Austria to Ethiopia; from Switzerland to South Africa; from Port au Prince, Haiti to Quebec City; from China to Columbia in South America. The fields are white unto harvest and we request you to pray for us and our missionaries. Going forward we would hope someday to invite you to consider seconding your short and long term missionaries to our works as the Reformed

Churches of New Zealand have done for many years, and as the United Reformed Churches are now doing.

Home Missions and church planting also continue to be a priority of our General Assembly and Presbyteries and new congregations have been gathered, organized, and instituted on a regular basis for which we are most grateful to the Lord. You are welcome to have a look at the website of our Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.

The OPC promotes Christian Education through Sunday School curriculum materials produced by the arm of Great Commission Publications. A Timothy program exposes high school students to the experience of theological education via a conference hosted at various seminaries that feed our corps of ministers, and yearly expose young men to the possibility of a pastoral life. An intern program supports candidates as they prepare for a call and ordination. A web presence is maintained through the highly utilized ministry of opc.org. Most encouraging is the publication of a new Psalter Hymnal in partnership with the United Reformed Churches in North America, highlighting the OPC's commitment both to catholicity of the church, and its commitment to Reformed worship as called for in our understanding of the regulative principle of worship.

Diaconal Ministry is supported through a Diaconal Committee overseen by the General Assembly. Last year's hurricane season saw this committee facilitate teams of volunteers who are still working in disaster relief missions to Puerto Rico, Texas, and Florida. Widows and orphans are cared for, as well as retired ministers who face financial shortfalls in later life.

In the area of ecumenicity, we have now Ecclesiastical Fellowship 20 churches around the world. The OPC remains committed to the cause of Catholic, Calvinistic, Confessional Ecumenicity.

On a very positive note, our 85th General Assembly met concurrently with the URCNA Synod June 11-15 at Wheaton College. The Lord graciously allowed us to hold numerous joint sessions for worship in order to inaugurate our new Trinity Psalter Hymnal.

We continue to exercise active membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council and the International Conference of Reformed Churches. We were very grateful to find ourselves of one mind with our sister churches, with the Canadian Reformed Churches in particular, in the unsought and unpleasant task that fell to the OPC in calling for the ICRC to suspend the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands from membership in the Conference. We pray that the Lord will turn the RCN back to the old paths, the faith of their fathers and ours. The CEIR is requesting our General Assembly to communicate directly to the forthcoming Synod of the RCN, our grave misgivings about the course our

Dutch brethren have insisted on following. This is done in accord with our rules for churches with which the OPC has a second level of fellowship, called Corresponding relations. While we never entered into full Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCN, precisely due to the matters that concern you also, we still have an ecclesiastical duty to appeal to our brothers to turn back, at least one last time.

This case illustrates a historical providential pattern in our ecumenical history. It is a significant historical record that demonstrates, I trust, our bona fides as a Reformed Church. This includes our past (in the 1980's) contending with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands/Synodical in the RES; with the Christian Reformed Church of North America (1990's), bilaterally and in NAPARC, with the Reformed Church of Japan (2000's); and finally with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands/Liberated in ICRC. Thus we are a Presbyterian Church, but one that is well aware of the Continental Reformed Churches. We know the significance of the

Afscheiding, Doleantie, and the difference between Vrijgemaakte and Synodaalen. After all, among our founding ministers were Cornelius Van Til, N.B. Stonehouse, and R.B. Kuiper. The heritage of their influence is still cherished among us.

As we recently celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we have invited sister churches to ponder afresh with us one of the foundational slogans of that age. It also is one worth pondering and preserving: *ad fontes*. Arguably, without the return to the fountainhead of Scripture and the church fathers like Augustine, there would have been no revival of the other solas of the Reformation. On his death bed the great reformer (ironically, who had instituted so much biblical change in Geneva) John Calvin, who was steeped in the original texts of Scripture and with a keen knowledge of the Church fathers urged the leaders of Geneva, **“not to innovate—we often ask for novelties—not that I desire for myself by ambition what mine remains, and that we retain it without wanting better, but because all change is hazardous and sometimes harmful.”** The advice of this leader is filled with layer upon layer of wisdom,” yes also for the OPC and her sisters.

Nevertheless, a day came when Geneva itself no longer walked in the footsteps of its own great *ille theologus*. Even Geneva, **“the most perfect school of Christ since the apostles”**, left her Reformed birthright. How much more then should we heed Calvin’s death bed charge. How much more likely are we to have our lamp stand removed from its place among the churches of Jesus Christ? Often and again we hear the siren call to be relevant and contemporary. We hear, *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*, a Reformed Church is always Reforming. Yes indeed, but not by revolution, but by a fresh application, *ab initio*, from the first principles of our fathers and our own sincere embrace of their practice of *ad fontes*. Does not the discerning eye note that history is strewn with churches that did not heed Calvin’s dying plea? God help us to beware of innovation and asking for novelties, remembering, all change is hazardous, and sometimes harmful.

The OPC history is exactly parallel to this. We also are a church of secession from the insidious innovations wrought in the early 20th century by modernism in the PCUSA. This separation was necessary in order to return to the Word of God, the Westminster Standards (**“the creed God has taught us in His Word”**), and Scriptural Church Government. Paraphrasing Machen on June 11, 1936, **“the pain of the long years of struggle having melted away ... our hearts were filled with joy that at last we were members of a true, Presbyterian church.”** This is an historical narrative that no doubt resonates with you as children of your own historical “secession and return” to the Word of God.

I close with an anecdote from my history, and yours. 29 years ago in 1990 it was my privilege to host Dr. Jelle Faber, in behalf of the RCNZ where I was a young pastor, as he preached and spoke during a tour down under after his retirement from his CRTS Seminary duties. When I read in Clarion that he was to tour Australia, I got on the phone from down under and called him and asked him to come over and help us in New Zealand also. He and his dear wife gladly obliged us, and made a great impact in planting a seed that would eventually germinate into official ties with your sister church (and ours) in New Zealand. He encouraged me to reach out to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia as well. In due time I was delegated to attend as an observer, this was August of 1990, the FRCA Synod in Armadale. I am happy to tell you that the RCNZ and FRCA are now also sister churches! It only took 25 years! Here we behold ecumenical history unfolding, and it involved Canadian Reformed and OPC co-operation. Let me

excitedly inform you that last year, after 28 years, it was my privilege to attend the FRCA Synod outside Perth, this time not in behalf of the RCNZ, but the OPC. And this also was a co-operative effort between our churches, because you sent via your Fraternal Delegate a most kind attestation for the OPC, and encouraged your sister church to reach out and get to know us! This thrills my heart, and in behalf of the OPC and the CEIR I thank you for your love for and loyalty to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We esteem you very highly in the Lord and we are so grateful for your faithful commitment to the Reformed Faith and to us in these dark days. And we earnestly hope, and ask you to pray, that our OPC relationship with the FRCA might become as solid and useful as that which now obtains between the OPC and the CanRC.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, fathers and brothers, for the great privilege you have afforded me in behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to address your Synod. (And thank you Peter for reading this for me. I regret very deeply not being able to be there myself.)

Now may the blessed Lord Jesus, King and Savior, continue to subdue us to himself and his Word, that as fellow pilgrims together on the narrow path that alone leads to life, we may continue hearing and heeding the words of the Prophet: ***Stand by the way, and behold, and seek for the ancient paths where the good way is; and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.***

APPENDIX 17 – Days of prayer supplementary report (Agenda item 8.2.12.2)

Canadian Reformed Church Edmonton-Providence
Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church Burlington-Waterdown

November 17, 2018

General Synod Edmonton 2019 c/o Synod Organizing Committee
Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton
2111235AveNW
Edmonton, AB T6M 2P6 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 .

In q letter dated September 27, 2018 we reported that we had received no requests for a Day of Prayer. However since that date a request for a Day of Prayer was received by email on October 16, 2018 from the Canadian Reformed Church of Spring Creek. The request was discussed separately by the Councils of Edmonton-Providence and Rehoboth. Both Councils interpreted the request as being of a serious nature but yet not an acute or urgent affliction threatening the life of the Church. Therefore the conclusion was that the request did not fit the criteria stated in Article 54 CO, namely, "In times of war, general calamities, and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the churches".

Therefore the decision was to not proceed with the request. Brothers, again we wish you God's blessings in all your deliberations.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Kieft, clerk of Burlington-Waterdown

Jesse Meints, clerk of Edmonton-Providence

APPENDIX 18 – General Fund***Canadian Reformed Church at Carman East****Box 164, Carman, MB R0G 0J0**e-mail: carmaneastclerk@gmail.com*

February 4, 2019

General Synod 2019, Edmonton, AB

RE: Financial Report for General Fund from January 1, 2016 to February 4, 2019 Esteemed

Brothers,

The church of Carman East was appointed by Synod Dunnville (2016), Article 31.4.5 to administer the General Fund and to collect funds as required from the churches, The council of Carman East had appointed br. Gerry Vandersluis as treasurer for this fund and he continued in this capacity until the end of 2018. After doing this for 30 years, br.

Vandersluis requested to be relieved and sr. Hilly Kooiker has now been appointed to this task. An email address generalfundcarmaneast@gmail.com has been established so that communication and requests for reimbursement can be made via this email address. All mail should be addressed to the Carman East church address at Box 164, Carman, MB R0G 0J0. To administer this fund the churches were assessed \$2 per communicant member for 2016, \$2 for 2017 and \$2 for 2018.

Council of Carman East requests that Synod 2019 have each committee appoint a treasurer to approve all requests for reimbursement for any member on that committee. A blank expense form has been created to be sent to each committee to be used for all requests for reimbursement.

	Opening Balance January 1, 2016	\$41614.59
<u>Income:</u>		
Assessment from the churches	<u>\$70053.61</u>	
	Total Income	\$70053.61
<u>Expenses:</u>		
Book of Praise Committee	\$280.23	
Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad	\$44116.08	
Committee for Contact with Churches of North America	\$27024.34	
Committee for Ecclesiastical Unity	\$8425.28	
Website Committee	\$12565.77	
Premier Printing (reports for General Synod)	\$7710.70	
Bank Charges	<u>\$123.50</u>	
	Total Expenses	\$100245.90
	Closing Balance February 4, 2019	\$11422.30

Talbot Bergsma-Chairman

Leonard Bergsma-Clerk

APPENDIX 19 – Press Release of General Synod Edmonton Immanuel 2019.

On Monday May 13, twenty-four delegates from across Canada gathered in Edmonton Alberta in preparation for the convening of the 2019 General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches. In the evening, Rev. Richard Aasman, the chairman of the previous General Synod in Dunnville, led a special worship service. He preached on 1 John 3:1-3 – focusing on how lavish is the love that the Father has showered upon us in Jesus Christ. This message provided encouragement to the delegates about to begin their work the next day and to the many members in attendance from the Immanuel and surrounding congregations.

On Tuesday morning, Rev. Julius VanSpronsen, on behalf of the convening church opened the meeting, by welcoming all present, especially the delegates to GS 2019. He led in opening devotions which included a brief meditation on the words of 1 Timothy 6:11-21. The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. Twenty-two primary delegates and two alternate delegates were present and signed the attendance list.

Through a free vote, the following brothers were chosen to serve in the executive: Rev. Douwe Agema as chairman, Rev. John Louwerse as vice-chairman, Rev. Karlo Janssen as 1st clerk, and Rev. Peter Holtvluwer as 2nd clerk. On behalf of the convening church, the Rev. VanSpronsen declared Synod constituted. The newly chosen chairman thanked the assembly for confidence expressed in the elected officers of Synod. He expressed much appreciation to the convening church for all the work done in preparation for Synod. Apart from receiving and organizing hundreds of documents, the host church also arranged lodging and transportation for the delegates and had the responsibility of providing three meals a day for at least twenty-four men and often more when delegates from sister churches were present. This work was very much appreciated by the delegates.

Synod was briefly adjourned, while the executive took the opportunity to prepare proposals regarding the proceedings of Synod and the division of tasks among the various members of Synod. When Synod reconvened, the agenda was adopted, and 5 advisory committees were appointed. Each committee was assigned particular agenda items to consider and came forward with proposals for discussion, deliberation and adoption in plenary session. In the early stages of Synod most of the time was devoted to meetings of these advisory committees. As time went on, there were more and more plenary sessions.

In the following paragraphs, the major decisions of Synod Edmonton Immanuel will be reviewed, not necessarily in the order they were made. Synod had to deal with several personal and confidential appeals, as well as appeals and overtures from individual churches, which are not included in this review.

Anyone who wishes to have more detail about the decisions of Synod can explore the *Acts of Synod* which have already been published on the Canadian Reformed Churches website and will be released in printed form in the near future.

Ecumenical Relationships.

The Canadian Reformed Churches enjoy ecclesiastical fellowship with various churches in North America and around the world. Delegations from these churches were present at General Synod and were given the privileges of the floor and many availed themselves of this opportunity.

On the first evening of General Synod, a letter of greetings from the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI) was read, as these churches were unable to send a delegation to Synod. The Rev. Ben Westerveld, delegate from the Reformed Churches in Quebec (ERQ), addressed Synod describing the ERQ and its ministries and expressing gratitude for our sister church relationship. Elder Dr. James Wanliss, spoke on behalf on the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)(FCC), describing the FCC, its worship and outreach efforts, its history and distinctives and expressing gratitude for the unity of faith. The Rev. Travis Grassmid, representing the Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS), expressed appreciation for the relationship with the CanRC and urging the Synod to be faithful to the Word in the matters before it.

On the second evening, Br. Johannes Moes, delegate from the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa gave an address, describing the FRCSA, its history and its ministries. He expressed gratitude for unity in the faith, evident in the assistance the FRCSA received from CRTS in training theological students. He outlined the need for financial support in South Africa for mission projects and described the inter-church relations of the FRCSA. The Rev, Adriano Gama, one of three delegates from the Reformed Churches of Brazil (IRB) addressed Synod, expressing gratitude for the relationship with the CanRC and the 48 years of work by the CanRC in Brazil. He also described the history of the IRB and some of its projects and ministries.

The Rev. Yonson Dethan, delegate from the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRC) was given the opportunity to address Synod. Besides passing on greetings, he expressed appreciation for the ties with the CanRC and regret over the fact that those ties have not yet become ones of ecclesiastical fellowship. He described the history of the GGRC, its Indonesian context, its current ministries and outreach projects, including its involvement with Smithville's mission work in Timor.

The Rev. Rinze IJbema and the Rev. Dr. Melle Oosterhuis, delegates from Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv) also addressed Synod. Rev. IJbema brought greetings and described the origin of the relationship between GKv and the CanRC in 1952. He also expressed regret about the tension that exists between the GKv and the CanRC at this time and stated that the GKv would dearly love for the sister church relationship to continue. The Rev. Dr. Oosterhuis then addressed synod, explaining the decisions of GS-GKv 2017 (Meppel) especially regarding hermeneutics as the background to GKv decisions that concern the CanRC.

On the third evening, the Rev. Hendrik Alkema, delegate from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia addressed Synod, expressing appreciation and gratitude for the close ties between the FRCA and CanRC. He described some of the many ways in which the two federations are connected. He spoke briefly of the development of the Australian *Book of Praise* and the study of the feasibility of training for the ministry in Australia. He also gave an overview of the inter-church relations of the FRCA. The Rev. Leo de Vos, delegate from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand described the history of Christianity in New Zealand and the blended character of the RCNZ. He gave an impression of church life in the RCNZ and expressed appreciation of the way in which the RCNZ and CanRC cooperate in mission in Papua New Guinea. The Rev. Bill Pols delegate from the United Reformed Churches of North America expressed appreciation for the ties between the URCNA and CanRC, describing how some of those ties are evident in church life. He outlined some of the recent developments in the URCNA, including the doctrinal affirmation on marriage and the introduction of the *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal*.

The last fraternal observer to address Synod on Thursday evening was the Rev. Bill Barron, from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC). He spoke of the history of the ARPC and its current character. He described how the ARPC and RPCNA are growing together. He gave an impression of some of the works in the ARPC, including its education ministries and its mission projects.

On Monday evening a letter of greeting was received from the Rev. Jack Sawyer on behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Personal circumstances that arose at the time of Synod prevented him from coming. Hence the Rev. Holtvluwer read the speech prepared by Rev. Sawyer. The history of the OPC was briefly described, followed by a description of ministries and current activities of the OPC.

It was good to hear about the gracious work of our Lord Jesus Christ in many countries and church federations. It was also a joy when Synod decided to maintain ecclesiastical fellowship between the CanRC and these various church federations and maintain our participation in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) as well as the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

One of the most difficult decisions which Synod had to make was, with sadness, to discontinue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKv) and to implore the Canadian Reformed Churches to continue in prayer for these churches. This decision came upon the recommendation of the subcommittee appointed by a previous Synod to deal with the Dutch sister churches. In coming to this decision, Synod considered, that nothing in Rev. Oosterhuis' presentation showed that the sub-committee's outline of developments was inaccurate or that its assessment of these developments and their implications was in error. Synod also observed that sister churches from around the world have encouraged the GKv to rethink the course upon which they have gone, and yet in Synod Meppel 2017, the GKv were not convinced by the admonitions of their sister churches. And Synod noted that now these churches approve of developments contrary to the Lord's instruction in his Word; the marks of the true church cannot with confidence be said to be consistently present in these churches. Further, it considered that continuing a relation with the GKv would communicate that we are not sorely grieved by their recent decisions and are not earnest about our past letters and words of admonition. Conversely, severing the relation would communicate to our own members the need to be watchful that we in the Canadian Reformed Churches do not follow a similar path. At the same time severing the relation would give encouragement to the faithful members in the GKv to take similar action. Lastly, it noted that the discontinuation of the relationship at this time is not irreversible. Should a future synod of the GKv give evidence that the churches have reversed their direction, the CanRC's can reestablish relations. Synod also adopted the text of a letter to be sent to all the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv) and brought in person to their synod 2021.

New Contacts and Relationships

Synod Edmonton did decide to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRC). Synod also decided to extend ecclesiastical fellowship to the Reformed Churches Indonesia (GGRI) as a whole, being the federation of the churches in Kalimantan Barat (GGRI-KalBar), the churches in Nusa Tenggara Timur (GGRI-NTT) and the churches in Papua (GGRI-Papua). These decisions were a reason for thankfulness.

It was also decided to accept the invitation of the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) and the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) to enter into their Level One correspondence. The Committee for Contact with Churches in North America was mandated by Synod to engage in continued dialogue and contact with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America.

Synod decided to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to continue contact with the Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK) and the Independent Reformed church of Korea (IRCK) where possible.

On another note, Synod decided to instruct two of its committees, the CRCA and the CCCNA to jointly do a thorough study on how Article 50 CO can best be executed in today's ecclesiastical realities. This study would, among other things also indicate how these two committees might most effectively and efficiently work together. These two committees are to submit a report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next Synod.

Unity with the United Reformed Churches.

Synod decided 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. Also, the decision was made not to reappoint the Committee for Church Unity, (including the sub-committees - Church Order, Theological Education, Common Songbook and Creeds and Forms).

General Synod, however, also expressed that the CanRC remain committed to the pursuit of unity with the United Reformed churches and are looking forward to re-engaging in this discussion when the URCNA is ready. Thus Synod decided to continue ecclesiastical fellowship (phase 2) with the United Reformed Churches in North America under the adopted rules.

Committee for the Official Website.

Thanksgiving was expressed by Synod to those involved in the development and implementation of the new federation website. When perusing the website you will find all the Acts of Synod Edmonton 2019 available for everyone to read. The committee was given a mandate to maintain the existing website and associate technical functions. Some of the technical functions associated with the website will be changed.

Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary.

The Board of Governors informed General Synod that it granted Dr. G.H. Visscher's request to retire upon the completion of the 2019-20 academic year. Synod approved of his retirement and expressed deep gratitude for his many years of faithful and diligent service to the Seminary and the Churches as professor of New Testament and of his nine years as Principal of the Seminary. The Board of Governors was directed to appoint Dr. William DenHollander of Langley as Professor of New Testament at CRTS. Dr. DenHollander was able to visit and address Synod and inform the body of his acceptance of this position at CRTS.

The Synod received the report of the Board of Governors in which it could be noted that CRTS continues to be a source of great blessing in the churches and to many others around the world. Synod appointed three new governors, the Rev. Rob Schouten, the Rev. Clarence Vandervelde, and br. Allan Datema. Thankfulness was expressed for the support of the Free Reformed

Churches of Australia and the financial contributions of the Women's Savings action to the well-being of the Seminary.

Synod adopted a proposal which came from both Regional Synod East and West which gave permission to seminary students to pursue licensure following two years of study in the M.Div program. This permission to speak an edifying word in the church after two years was granted under several conditions. It was also decided to mandate the Committee for Pastoral Training Program, 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. The PTP continues to function very well in the churches.

The Committee for the Needy Students Fund was instructed to seek advice, and if need be propose bylaw amendments to ensure that they remain in compliance with the Canadian Income Tax Act (CRA regulations) and the Church Order.

The Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*.

Synod Edmonton made a number of recommendations with respect to the *Book of Praise*, including the one, which had also been given by previous synods: "seek, receive, evaluate, and recommend proposals for changes to the hymn section to be compiled for possible submission to a future Synod." Connected with this recommendation that has great importance for the future of the Book of Praise in answer to an overture submitted by Regional Synod West 2018. This Regional Synod had sent an overture to General Synod 2019 to approve, in addition to the adopted Book of Praise, the Psalms and Hymns of the *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* (TPH; psalter-hymnal recently adopted by the OPC and URCNA) for use in public worship as per CO Article 55. Many churches made submissions interacting with this overture. General Synod decided to receive the overture submitted by RSW 2018 and to mandate the Standing Committee for the Book of Praise with the following:

Concerning Psalms: to seek input from the churches as to which non-Genevan renditions of the Psalms could be added to enhance the Psalm section of the BoP and to compile a list of suitable additional Psalm renditions for possible inclusion in the Book of Praise, using the TPH as a primary source.

Concerning Hymns: to seek input from the churches concerning replaceable and additional hymns for the 2014 Book of Praise, using the TPH as a primary resource: to compile a list of such hymns keeping in mind that at this time the final number of hymns in the Book of Praise should not exceed 100(as per GS 2004) and being flexible with the structural template (Apostles Creed) of the hymn-section of the 2014 Book of Praise.

Synod also gave the Committee the following instructions: to send, at least 18 months before the next general synod, an explanatory report out to the churches together with a provisional list of songs for immediate testing in the worship services if so desired, so there can be well-considered feedback to the next general synod and to receive feedback from the churches on the Committee's interim report and include its evaluation of that feedback along with actionable recommendations in its report six months before the next general synod.

This decision with respect to the overture from Regional Synod West 2018 was considered to serve as answer to several appeals/requests from a few churches.

Concluding thoughts.

We may give thanks to the Lord for the good working atmosphere among the delegates both while at work in committee and in plenary session. Under the capable leadership of the chairman Rev. Douwe Agema, General Synod could complete its work in eight days, making this Synod one of the shortest in recent times. May our Lord Jesus Christ bless the work of Synod Edmonton 2019 and may He also guide the churches as they consider and evaluate and implement the decisions that have been made by our broadest assembly. May the love of our Lord continue to rest on the churches represented at Synod Edmonton 2019.

Rev. John Louwerse

Vice-chairman Synod 2019.

APPENDIX 20 – Guidelines for General Synods²**I Convening and Constitution of Synod**

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

All material for Synod should be received by the convening church in paper or digital format (searchable text PDF as much as feasible) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of general synod. Those submitting material shall ensure that one signed copy is available for the archives of General Synod.³ Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.⁴

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.⁵

B. Correspondence from the convening church, including the notice of convocation, agendas, reports, and proposals may be sent to the churches and/or delegates as digital files. However, in order to maintain the confidentiality of potentially sensitive material, personal appeals as well as other documents which contain personal information (e.g., letters of appointment) must be sent from the convening church as password-protected digital files.⁶

C. The convening Church shall send the first Provisional Agenda to all the Churches at least six months prior to convocation.

D. All material submitted to the convening Church together with a copy of the current Guidelines for General Synods shall be sent to all delegates and the first alternates.⁷ All material submitted to Synod, including Reports, Appeals, Overtures which quote any foreign language source must provide in the text of the submission a full English translation and in a footnote the citation in the original language.⁸

E. All material for Synod should be received by the convening church in paper or digital format (searchable text PDF as much as feasible) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of general synod. Those submitting material shall ensure that one signed copy is available for the archives of General Synod.⁹ Material received after this date shall ordinarily

² GS 1983 Art. 45.

³ GS 2019 Art. 122, among others replacing a change made by GS 2013 Art. 176.

⁴ GS 1995 Art. 111; GS 2004 Art. 118.

⁵ GS 2019 Art. 122.

⁶ GS 2013 Art. 176.

⁷ GS 1986 Art. 76; GS 1995 Art. 111.

⁸ GS 1989 Art. 131.

⁹ GS 2019 Art. 122, among others replacing a change made by GS 2013 Art. 176.

not be added to the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable.¹⁰

- F. Since matters on the agenda of general synod involve the churches in common, regional synods shall distribute copies of adopted overtures to all the churches in the federation no later than five months prior to the convening of a general synod.¹¹
- G. The minister of the convening Church or its counselor shall act as chairman until Synod has been constituted.
1. He shall call the meeting to order in an ecclesiastical manner (cf. Art. 34, CO);
 2. He shall have the credentials examined as to whether General Synod can be constituted.
- H. Officers of Synod shall be chosen by ballot in this order: chairman, vice-chairman, first clerk, and second clerk. Election to office is to be by majority of valid votes cast.
- I. Although advice can be requested in particular matters, advisory members shall not be appointed.¹²
- J The convening church shall arrange to have people present during Synod to assist the clerks in preparing the Acts and to do other paper work.¹³

II Duties of the Officers

A. The Chairman

1. The chairman shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and is expedited as much as possible, and that members observe the rules of order and decorum (cf. CO 34, 35).
2. He shall call the meeting to order at the appointed time, call the roll and shall see to it that each session is properly opened and closed.
3. He shall welcome fraternal delegates or other guests and respond to greetings received or appoint other members for this purpose.
4. He shall place before Synod every motion that is made and seconded, in accord with the accepted order; and he shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken, so that every member may know on what he is voting.
5. If the chairman feels the need to speak on a pending question, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice-chairman for that period of time. While holding the chair, he may speak to state matters of fact or to inform Synod regarding points of order.
6. He shall have, and duly exercise, the prerogative of declaring a motion or a person out of order. If his ruling is challenged, it shall be submitted to Synod for decision by majority vote.
7. The chairman shall retain his right to vote on any question.

¹⁰ GS 1986 Art. 162; GS 1995 Art. 110.

¹¹ GS 2010 Art. 35, 174.

¹² GS 2007, Art. 147.

¹³ GS 2010, Art. 174.

8. In case of a point of order, the chairman must make a ruling at once. This ruling may be reversed by a majority of Synod, if any member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair and appeals to the floor.
9. The chairman shall close the Synod with appropriate remarks and prayer (CO 34).

B. The Vice-Chairman

1. The vice-chairman shall, in the absence of the chairman, assume all his duties and privileges.
2. The vice-chairman shall render all possible assistance to the chairman as circumstances require.
3. He shall prepare the Press Release.

C. The First Clerk

1. Every morning, after the roll call, he shall read the *Acts* of the previous day.
2. He shall keep a proper record of the business of Synod. This record should ordinarily contain:
 - a. The opening and closing of sessions and roll call.
 - b. All motions whether carried or defeated.
 - c. All final reports of committees and all decisions of Synod.
 - d. Any document or part of debate or address that Synod by a majority vote has decided to insert in the *Acts*.
3. He shall not include in the *Acts* any motion that was withdrawn.

D. The Second Clerk

1. The second clerk shall serve in the absence of the first clerk.
2. He shall render assistance to the first clerk as circumstances require.
3. He shall handle outgoing mail on behalf of Synod.

III Synodical Committees

A. Advisory Committees of Synod

1. The officers of Synod shall propose advisory committees, with a convener, to serve for the duration of Synod.
2. The officers of Synod shall propose an arrangement of matters on the agenda to the appropriate committees.
3. All reports shall be distributed in ample time before they are presented for discussion.
4. The committee reporter shall present the reports.
5. If there is a minority report as well as a majority report, both reports shall be given into discussion, but the majority report shall be voted upon first.
6. During the discussion, the task of defending the report shall rest primarily with the reporter of the committee. Other committee members shall receive the privilege of the floor to elaborate on or clarify any point.
7. In order to facilitate the discussion on a pending issue, the chair shall ordinarily call for the discussion in two parts (rounds). In the first part opportunity is given to members to

express remarks related to the issue in question. In the second or following parts, members may react to the discussion or the issue in question.

8. The discussion may be extended by discretion of the chairman or by a decision of Synod.
9. If anyone has been requested to advise Synod on any matter, he shall address synod on this point only when asked to do so by the chair.

B. Synodical Committees

1. All committees appointed by Synod shall see to it that they send a copy of their report in digital format to each of the local churches.¹⁴

IV Rules of Order

A. Closed Sessions of Synod

1. A closed session shall ordinarily mean a session where members of Synod and office-bearers may be present. This shall be used in delicate or unusual situations.
2. A closed-restricted session shall, as a rule, mean a session where members of Synod only may be present. This shall only take place when Synod judges that such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honour or the welfare of the Churches in extremely delicate situations.

B. Main Motions

A main motion is one which presents a certain subject for consideration or action.

1. A main motion is acceptable under the following conditions:
 - a. The mover has been recognized by the chair.
 - b. The motion has been seconded.
 - c. The motion is also presented in writing.
2. A main motion is not acceptable if another main motion is before Synod or if it conflicts with any decision already made by Synod.
3. A notice of motion may be given during the discussion.

C. A Motion to Amend

This is a proposal to alter a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the motion.

1. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute certain words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs.
2. A motion to amend is not a proper amendment if it nullifies the main motion or is not germane to it.
3. A motion to amend an amendment is permissible and is called a secondary motion.

D. Call for a Division of the Question

At the request of one or more members of Synod, a motion consisting of more than one part must be divided and voted upon separately, unless Synod decides that this is not necessary.

E. Objection to Consideration of a Question

¹⁴ GS 1995 Art. 110; GS 2013 Art. 176.

If any member is not satisfied with the ruling of the chair, the matter is referred to Synod for a decision.

F. Right of Protest

It is the right of any member to protest against any decision of Synod. Protest should be registered immediately, or during the session in which the matter concerned was acted upon. Protests must be registered individually and not in groups. Members may, if they feel the need, ask to have their negative vote recorded. Such requests must be made immediately after the vote is taken.

G. Motion to Bring Matters Once Decided Again Before Synod

Any member of Synod, for weighty reasons, may move to have a matter reconsidered, which was previously decided. The purpose of this motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote.

H. Discussion

1. To obtain the floor, a speaker must be recognized by the chair.
2. If any member has spoken twice on a pending issue, others who have not yet spoken twice shall, as a rule, be given priority by the chair.
3. When the chairman believes that a motion under consideration has been debated sufficiently, he may propose cessation of debate. If a majority of Synod sustains his proposal, discussion shall cease and the vote shall be taken.
4. Any member of Synod, when he deems a matter to have been debated sufficiently, may move to close the discussion. Should a majority be in favour, the vote shall be taken, but only after those who have already requested the floor have been recognized.

I. Voting

1. It is in the freedom of the chair to determine how the vote is to be taken: by calling the roll (in any order) or by show of hands.¹⁵
2. Voting about persons shall be by ballot.
3. Voting about delicate matters and other matters of a critical nature shall also be by ballot.

J. Revision

These Synodical Guidelines may be suspended, amended, revised or abrogated by a majority vote of Synod.

¹⁵ GS 2010 Art. 174.

APPENDIX 21 – EF: Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship¹⁶

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.

¹⁶ GS 1992 Art. 50.