

# Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad Report to GS 2019

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **PART 1: GENERAL**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**PART 2: RELATIONSHIPS**

**Australia (FRCA)**

**Introduction**

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

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

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

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

**History of the relationship**

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

**Summary of the report**

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

## **Brazil (IRB)**

### **Introduction**

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

### **Brief description of the IRB**

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

### **History of the relationship**

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

### **Summary of the report**

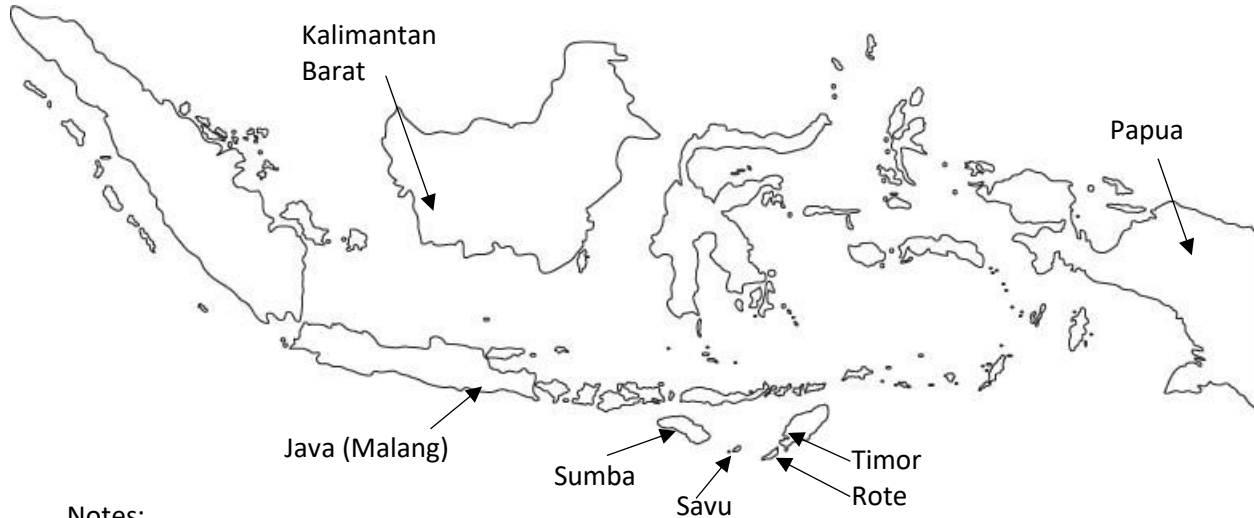
The CanRC has full EF with the IRB and so the relationship is similar to, for example, the relationship the CanRC has with the FRCA. Yet, the IRB looks to the CanRC as a big sister and very much appreciates the assistance that is given to them in many ways.

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

### Indonesia (GGRI, GGRC)

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

#### Indonesia: Maps



Notes:

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

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

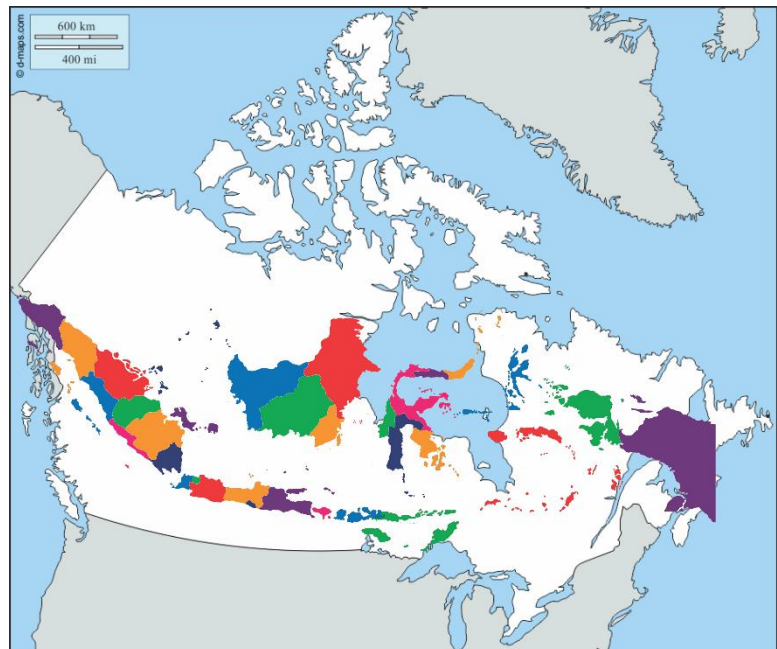
Indonesia is not only a country of great distances, it is also a nation of many peoples. The total population is over 260 million people. Smaller islands have their own ethnicity and culture, larger islands have many ethnicities and cultures, and large cities (like Kupang, population approaching 500.000)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

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

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

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

*Indonesia and Canada compared for size.*



**GGRI: Introduction**

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

**Brief description of GGRI**

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

**History of the relationship**

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

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

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

**Summary of the report**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**GGRC: Introduction**

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

**Brief description of GGRC as in 2018**

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

**History of the relationship**

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

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

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



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

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

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

### 13 Summary of the report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **KPCK: Introduction**

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

### **Brief description of KPCK**

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

### **History of the relationship**

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

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

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

### **Summary of the report**

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

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

1 **IRCK: Introduction**

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

3 **Brief description of IRCK**

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

4 **History of the relationship**

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

10 **Summary of the report**

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

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

16

1 **RCK: Introduction**

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

3 **Brief description of RCK**

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

4 **History of the relationship**

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

8 **Summary of the report**

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

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

14

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

### **Introduction**

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

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

Source of church data: Yearbook of the RCNZ 2018

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

### **History of the relationship**

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

### **Summary of the report**

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

## **Scotland (FCS, FCC)**

### **FCS: Introduction**

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

### **Brief description of FCS**

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

### **History of the relationship**

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

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

### **Summary of the report**

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

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

1 **FCC: Introduction**

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

4 **Brief description of FCC**

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

5 **History of the relationship**

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

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

19 **Summary of the report**

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

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

28

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



## **South Africa (FRCSA)**

### **Introduction**

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

### **Brief description of FRCSA**

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

### **History of the relationship**

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

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

### **Summary of the report**

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

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

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

### **Introduction**

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

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

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

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

### **History of our membership**

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

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

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

### **Summary of the report**

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

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

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

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

## SECTION 2 – FULL-LENGTH CRCA REPORT

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

### **PART 1: GENERAL**

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

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

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

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

The CRCA met on the following dates:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

##### **Germany**

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

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

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

3 **Hungary and surroundings**

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

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

10 **Reacting to requests for contact**

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

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

17 **1. Observation**

18 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

21 **2. Considerations:**

22 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

27 **3. Recommendation:**

28 We recommend that synod decide:

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

33 ***Finances***

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

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

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

41 ***Appointments***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 **1. Observation:**

19 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

22 **2. Considerations:**

23 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 24 2.1 In view of the increased workload it is advisable to increase the CRCA from 6 to 7 members.  
25 Effectively this is a reduction from 10 to 7 members, as the 4-member CRCA-SRN has been  
26 dissolved.  
27 2.2 It is important that at least one of those involved in maintaining a relationship with a church  
28 abroad be directly aware of CanRC policy and practice, and thus should be part of the CRCA.

29 **3. Recommendation:**

30 We recommend that synod decide:

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

32 ***Other general matters***

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

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

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

43 In light of the foregoing we submit the following:

44 **1. Observation:**

45 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

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

1 **PART 2: RELATIONSHIPS**

2 **Australia (FRCA)**

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

4 **History of the Relationship**

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

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

12 GS 2016 (art. 21) decided:

13 4.1 *To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of*  
14 *Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules;*

15 4.2. *To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing support for and interest in the*  
16 *Theological Seminary, including their financial support;*

17 4.3. *To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)*

18 4.3.1 *To maintain close contact with the various deputyships of the FRCA in matters of relations with*  
19 *sister-churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third party*  
20 *relationships;*

21 4.3.2 *To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding*  
22 *CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP),*  
23 *the Subcommittee for Reformed churches in The Netherlands of the CRCA (CRCA-SRN), our*  
24 *committee in charge of reviewing the liturgical forms, Committee on Bible Translations, and*  
25 *perhaps others) in areas of mutual interest where the CRCA's mandate does not reach;*

26 4.3.3 *To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2018.*

27 **Execution of the Mandate**

28 The decisions of GS 2016 regarding the FRCA were made known to the FRCA via letter. The CanRC rules  
29 for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Acts of Synod Dunnville and the Press Release were sent to the FRCA. At their  
30 invitation, br. H. Schouten and Rev. A. Witten were delegated to attend Synod Bunbury held from June 18–  
31 26, 2018. They were received and seated as fraternal delegates. Opportunity was given to address synod.  
32 The delegates thanked the FRCA for their continued support for CRTS and expressed concerns about the  
33 impact that the establishment at this time of an Australian Reformed Theological seminary would have on  
34 the CRTS and on both of our respective federations. Other topics touched on were mission work and  
35 relationships with churches abroad and in North America. The CanRC delegates invited the various  
36 deputyships of the FRCA to take up direct contact with the corresponding CanRC Committee. During their  
37 time at synod, the delegates sat in on open sessions of Synod, and met separately with committees of synod,  
38 and discussed with the various deputyships of the FRCA matters of mutual interest.

39 **FRCA matters**

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

41 **Canadian Reformed Churches**

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

38 **Other relationships**

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

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

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

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

### 3 **Observations**

4 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 40 **Considerations**

41 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

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

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

3 **Recommendations**

4 We recommend that synod decide:

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

23

## **Brazil (IRB)**

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

### **History of the Relationship**

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

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

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

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

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

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

GS 2016 (art. 88) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 brother over a three-year period.

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

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

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

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

## 21 Observations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 11 **Consideration**

12 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

### 15 **Recommendations**

16 We recommend that synod decide:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GS 2007 (art. 151):

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

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

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

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

GS 2010 (art. 108):

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

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

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

*4.6 To mandate the CRCA:*

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

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

GS 2013 (art. 123)

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

*4.3 To mandate the CRCA:*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

3     GS 2016 (art. 115) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 17 Observations

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

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

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

35 In short, we recommend that synod observe:

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 We recommend that synod observe:

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

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

26 We recommend that synod observe:

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

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

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

33 ***Considerations:***

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 **Remembering:**

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

10 **Observation:**

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

13 **Decisions:**

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

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

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

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

21 We recommend that synod observe:

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

26 **Summary of recommended observations**

27 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19                   **Considerations**

20                   We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

26                   **Recommendations**

27                   We recommend that synod decide:

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

1 **GGRC: History of the Relationship**

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

3 GS 2001 (art. 54):

4 **2. Observations**

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

7 **4. Recommendations**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 GS 2007 (art. 150):

19 **5 Recommendation**

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

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

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

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

26 GS 2010 (art. 108):

27 **4. Recommendation**

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

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

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

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

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

35 4.6 *To mandate the CRCA:*

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

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

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

42 GS 2013 (art. 124):

43 **4. Recommendation**

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

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

48 4.4 *To mandate the CRCA:*

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

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

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

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

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

13 GS 2016 (art. 116) decided:

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

16 4.2 To mandate the CRCA:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 **Observations**

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

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

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

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

31 In short, we recommend that synod observe:

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

43 **GGRC and church unity**

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 **Summary of recommended observations**

2 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

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

6 4.2 *To mandate the CRCA:*

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

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

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

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

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

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

28 **Considerations**

29 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

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

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

37 **Recommendations**

38 We recommend that synod decide:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

38 **Decision:** To mandate the CRCA

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

#### 41 **STAKRI**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 **Observations:**

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

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

18 **Decision:** No longer to encourage churches in Indonesia to use or cooperate with a particular seminary  
19 for their theological training.  
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**Appendix A – Letter from the GGRI to the CanRC**

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

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Waingapu, October 21,2016

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

Eesteemed brothers

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

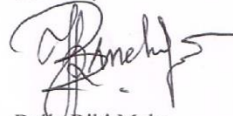
At our first National Synod held in February 2012 in Papua, Reformed Churches in three places: Papua, East Nusa Tenggara and West Kalimantan became one federaton. Our National Synod is held every four years. At our Second National Synod in 2016 we also dealt with one item regarding our relationship as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

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

Yours in Christ



Secretary



Balla Rihi Meha

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GS 1989 (art. 103): No change.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GS 2016 (art. 81) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 6. Some correspondence (invitations) was exchanged.

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

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

### 13 **Observations**

14 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 32 **Considerations**

33 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

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

### 37 **Recommendations**

38 We recommend that synod decide:

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

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

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

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

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

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



1 **IRCK: History of the Relationship**

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

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

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

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

7 GS 2016 (art. 107) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 **Observations**

21 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

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

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

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

30 **Considerations**

31 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

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

35 **Recommendations**

36 We recommend that Synod decide:

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

1 **RCK: History of the Relationship**

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

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

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

8 GS 2016 (art. 106) decided:

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

11 **Execution of this mandate**

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

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

18 **Observations**

19 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

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

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

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

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

28 **Considerations**

29 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

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

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

34 **Recommendation**

35 We recommend that Synod decide:

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

## **New Zealand (RCNZ)**

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

### **History of the Relationship**

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

GS 2004 (art. 100):

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

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

GS 2007 (art. 66):

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

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

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

GS 2010 (art. 154)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GS 2016 (art. 17) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 **Observations**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 23 **Considerations**

24 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

### 27 **Recommendations**

28 We recommend that synod decide:

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

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

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

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

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

36

## Scotland (FCS, FCC)

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

### FCS: History of the Relationship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Decisions of GS 2016 (Dunnville)

GS 2016 (art. 46) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Observations

We advise synod to include in its observations:

1. GS 2016 (Article 46) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 11 **Considerations**

12          We advise synod to include in its considerations:

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

### 16 **Recommendations**

17          We recommend that synod decide:

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

1 **FCC: History of the Relationship**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16 GS 2016 (art. 45) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

35 **Observations**

36 We advise synod to include in its observations:

37 1. GS 2016 (Article 46) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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



1 secularized context.

2 **Considerations**

3 We advise synod to include in its considerations:

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

7 **Recommendations**

8 We recommend that synod decide:

- 9 1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Church Continuing (FCC)  
10 under the adopted rules;  
11 2. To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):  
12 2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the  
13 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), mutual presence at assemblies of sister-  
14 churches);  
15 2.2 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;  
16 2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.  
17

## **South Africa (FRCSA)**

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

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

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

GS 2004 (art. 33):

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

5.2. *To mandate the CRCA:*

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

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

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

GS 2007 (art. 124):

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

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

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

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

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

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

GS 2016 (art. 47) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Observations**

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

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

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

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

We recommend that synod observe:

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

### **The CRTS**

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

We recommend that synod observe:

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

### **Financial Assistance**

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

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

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

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

1 We recommend that synod observe:

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

4 **Summary of recommended observations**

5 We advise that Synod include among its observations:

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

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

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

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

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

19 **Considerations**

20 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

36 **Recommendations**

37 We recommend that synod decide:

- 38 1. To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA);  
39 2. To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):  
40 2.1 to send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;  
41 2.2 if requests for financial assistance for FRCSA projects (to help them support the needy churches  
42 in their federation and assist them with their extensive mission and relief work efforts) are  
43 received, assist them in seeking out appropriate churches or organizations which may be able  
44 to responsibly interact with such requests; in the event that churches are willing and able to  
45 help, inform them that there are Canada Revenue Agency regulations regarding the need for  
46 charitable organizations which send money overseas to have “direction and control” over how  
47 these funds are disbursed;  
48 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.  
49

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

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

### **History of our membership**

GS 1980 (art. 153):

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

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

GS 1983 (art. 121):

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

*...*

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

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

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

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

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

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

GS 2016 (art. 121) decided:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 The CanRC delegates participated fully in ICRC activities.

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

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

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

15 Some of the highlights of this ICRC were:

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

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

## 19 Observations

### 20 Recent activity

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

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

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

26 4. The ICRC adopted revisions to the Constitution.

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

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

32 We recommend that synod observe:

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

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

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

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

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

42 Treasurer: Mr. K. Lodder

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

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

46 Publications Committee member: Mr. F. Ezinga

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

1 We recommend that synod observe:

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

4 **CanRC delegations to the ICRC**

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

11 We recommend that synod observe:

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

14 **Overview of Observations**

15 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 4. The ICRC adopted revisions to the Constitution.

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

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

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

33 **Considerations**

34 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

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

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

39 **Recommendations**

40 We recommend that synod decide:

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

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

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

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

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

### INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

### HISTORY

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

GS 1962 (art. 226) created a Committee to Write to the Christian Reformed Church (CRCNA) and continued the CCCA.

GS 1965 (art. 216) continued the CCCA and created two further committees, one for Contact with the CRCNA, the other for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). The Committee for Contact with the CRCNA existed for a short while.

GS 1992 (art. 124) continued the CCCA and CC-OPC, and further created a Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU) to represent the CanRC at the Alliance of Reformed Churches (cf. art. 80). GS 1992 (art. 79) mandated the CCCA to investigate the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS).

GS 1995 (art. 118) continued the CCCA, CC-OPC, CPEU, and added a Committee for Contact with the Reformed Church in Quebec (ERQ).

GS 1998 (art. 143), besides continuing the CPEU, reorganized things somewhat by creating two committees: the CRCA (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad) and the CCCA (*now*: Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas). For the CCCA three subcommittees were appointed directly by synod: RCUS, ERQ, and OPC.

GS 2001 (art. 98) continued the CRCA, CCCA, and CPEU. Contact with the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) arose via the CRCA, GS 2001 (art. 56) determined it would be the domain of the CCCA. The Synod Acts did not report the appointment of subcommittees.

GS 2004 (art. 116) continued the CRCA, CCCA, and CPEU. The index to the Acts suggests that the CCCA mandate now included mandates for: the Independent Presbyterian Churches in Mexico, the Korean



1 Presbyterian Churches in North America, the ERQ, the OPC, the RCUS, and the IRB, as well as NAPARC.  
2 GS 2007 (art. 174) decided to divide the workload somewhat differently again, by appointing a Committee  
3 for Church Unity (CCU), a Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA), and a  
4 Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA). The CCCNA was split into a subcommittee East  
5 and a subcommittee West.

6 GS 2010 (art. 60) received a recommendation from the CRCA to consolidate and reorganise inter church  
7 relations by disbanding the CRCA and CCCNA and create one Committee on Inter-church Relations. As  
8 this recommendation did not include comment from the CCCNA and did not clearly have broad support  
9 among the churches the proposal was not adopted. GS 2010 (art. 167) continued the CRCA, CCCNA, and  
10 CCU, and created the CRCA–Subcommittee for Contact with Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

## 11 **OBSERVATIONS**

12 The CRCA and CCCNA advise that synod include in its observations:

- 13 1. The CRCA and CCCNA have provided synod with an overview of the history of inter-church relations  
14 as practised by the CanRC since coming into existence.
- 15 2. The structural organization of the CanRC interchurch relations committees is as follows.  
16 The CRCA consists of 6 members, and is currently responsible for 8 EF relations (Australia, New  
17 Zealand, Scotland (2), South Africa, Brazil, Indonesia, Korea), the ICRC, plus 3 contacts (2 in  
18 Korea, 1 in Indonesia)  
19 The CCCNA consists of 8 members, and is currently responsible for 3 EF relations (OPC, RCUS, ERQ),  
20 NAPARC, plus all NAPARC member churches (URCNA excepted) as contacts  
21 The CCU consists of 4 members, and is currently responsible for 1 EF relation (URCNA)  
22 The CRCA-SRN consists of 4 members, and is currently responsible for 1 EF relation (GKv), plus 2  
23 contacts (DGK, GKN).
- 24 3. (If synod indeed so decides:) The dissolution of the CRCA-SRN will increase the workload of the  
25 CRCA.
- 26 4. In the past, committees were put together regionally so that members could meet face to face.  
27 However, over the past three years, many committee meetings have made efficient use of digital  
28 video conferencing technology.<sup>19</sup> Physical distance between members of a committee is no longer  
29 a hindrance in performing committee work.
- 30 5. In the run up to GS 2016 (Dunville) there was lack of clarity over who was should be extending  
31 invitations to other churches and what materials their delegates should have access to.

## 32 **CONSIDERATIONS**

33 The CRCA and CCCNA advise that synod include in its considerations:

- 34 1. The workload of maintaining relationships and contacts with other churches is irregularly distributed  
35 among the various committees.
- 36 2. In 2010 the CRCA recommended consolidation and reorganization of the committees. At that time  
37 the CCCNA was unaware of this recommendation, which became a reason for not adopting it. This  
38 time the request is coming from the CRCA and CCCNA together.
- 39 3. The proposal is not to consolidate and reorganize right now. Rather, it is to mandate a study of how  
40 CO article 50 can best be executed. The “history” makes clear that thus far the approach has  
41 allowed for inconsistencies between the various committees. Thus a study is warranted.
- 42 4. There is not just “one right way” to do inter church relations. Reorganizations have occurred  
43 previously in 1998 and 2007.
- 44 5. Whatever the outcome of this study, there are a number of practical issues that need to be

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<sup>19</sup> During 2016-2019 the CRCA had one member in Houston, BC, one member in Vernon, BC, and four members in the Fraser Valley. Video conferencing is used for at least one if not two members every meeting.

1 addressed specifically. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, matters relating to inviting  
2 other churches to be present at CanRC general synods, the composition of CanRC delegations to  
3 multi-church conferences such as the ICRC and NAPARC, and effectively having only one level of  
4 relationship (EF); at times a synod has mandated a committee to maintain contact with another  
5 church, without working towards EF.

- 6 6. The study should result in recommendations as to how the findings of the study might become part  
7 of our ecclesiastical regulations (e.g. Church Order, Rules for EF, Synod Guidelines).

## 8 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9 The CRCA and CCCNA recommend that synod decide:

- 10 1. To mandate the CanRC inter-church relations committees (CRCA, CCCNA, CRCA-SRN, and CCU<sup>20</sup>):  
11 1.1. to reflect in consultation with each other on CanRC protocols regarding:  
12 1.1.1 Whom to invite as delegates and whom to invite as observers to our general synods;  
13 1.1.2 Who is responsible for extending this invitation;  
14 1.1.3 What are the rights and privileges of delegates and observers during synod; How are they  
15 cared for during the time of synod and how can they interact with synod (members)?  
16 1.1.4 What synod materials are delegates and observers respectively entitled to;  
17 1.1.5 Who is responsible for ensuring delegates and observers receive the materials they are  
18 entitled to;  
19 1.1.6 How to have CanRC representation at multi-church conferences (e.g. ICRC, NAPARC);  
20 1.2 to recommend how their findings and recommendations as per 1.1 become part of our  
21 ecclesiastical regulations;  
22 1.3 to reflect in consultation with each other how the CanRC interchurch relations committees  
23 might most effectively and efficiently work together, including but not limited to the following  
24 matters:  
25 1.3.1 the flow of information between CanRC inter-church relations committees;  
26 1.3.2 cooperation between CanRC inter-church relations committees;  
27 1.3.3 the pros and cons of consolidating and reorganizing all inter-church relations committees  
28 into one, taking into consideration reflection on this in the past;  
29 1.3.4 the pros and cons of maintaining different types of relationships;  
30 1.4 to report on their findings as per 1.3 and to make recommendations to the churches in relation  
31 to their findings;  
32 1.5 to submit their report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general  
33 synod.  
34  
35

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<sup>20</sup> In the event the CCU and/or CRCA-SRN is/are discontinued, it/they can be removed.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

The use of abbreviations and acronyms follows the principles set out in the introduction to the acts of GS 2016 (Dunnville).

Language of origin	English equivalent	Spelled out
ARC	ARC	American Reformed Church (affiliated with the CanRC)
BBK	RCA	<i>Betrekkingen met Buitenlandse Kerken</i> (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of a Dutch church federation)
BC	BC	Belgic Confession
CanRC	CanRC	Canadian Reformed Church(es)
CCCA (1954-1998)	CCCA	Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad (of the CanRC). Became the CRCA in 1998.
CCCA (1998-2007)	CCCA	Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas (of the CanRC). The 'jurisdiction' of this committee was later divided over what is now the CRCA, the CCCNA, and the CCU.
CCCNA	CCCNA	Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (of the CanRC)
CCERQ	CCERQ	Committee for Contact with the ERQ (of the CanRC). Merged with other committees in 1998 into the CCCA.
CCOPC	CCOPC	Committee for Contact with the OPC (of the CanRC). Merged with other committees in 1998 into the CCCA.
CCU	CCU	Committee for Church Unity (of the CanRC)
CERCU	CERCU	Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (of the URCNA)
CGKN	CRCN	<i>Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i> (Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands)
CLIR	LAFRC	Latin American Fellowship of Reformed Churches
CLIREF	CLIREF	Committee for Reformed Literature (of the IRB)
CO	CO	Church Order
CPEU	CPEU	Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (of the CanRC) – this committee is now known as the CCU
CRCA	CRCA	Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (of the CanRC)
CRCA-SRN	CRCA-SRN	Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad – Subcommittee for Reformed (churches in the) Netherlands (of the CanRC)
CRCAus	CRCAus	Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
CREIB	CREIB	Committee for Ecclesiastical Relations of the IRB (Brazil)
CRTS	CRTS	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
DGK	TRC	The Reformed Churches / De Gereformeerde Kerken. Aka Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (restored).
EF	EF	Ecclesiastical Fellowship
EPCI	EPCI	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Language of origin	English equivalent	Spelled out
ERQ	RCQ	Reformed Church of Quebec / Église Réformée du Québec
ESV	ESV	English Standard Version (of the Bible)
FCC	FCC	Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
FCS	FCS	Free Church of Scotland
FERC	FERC	First Evangelical Reformed Church (Singapore)
FRCA	FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA	FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (English is now the preferred language; previously also known as VGKSA)
GA	GA	General Assembly (broadest assembly of a church practising Westminster polity)
GGRC	CRCI	<i>Gereja-Gereja Calvini Reformasi di Indonesia</i> (Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia)
GGRI	RCI	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia)
GGRI-KalBar	RCI-KalBar	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Kalimantan Barat</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the Province of Kalimantan Barat)
GGRI-NTT	RCI-NTT	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timur</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur)
GGRI-Papua	RCI-Papua	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Papua</i> (Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the Province of Papua)
GKH DGK	RCR TRC	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken – Hersteld</i> (Reformed Churches – Restored) – now known as <i>De Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (The Reformed Churches)
GKNvv GKN	RCNtf	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (voorlopig verband)</i> – Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (temporary federation) Now known as: “ <i>Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland</i> ”
GKSA	RCSA	<i>Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika</i> – Reformed Churches in South Africa
GKv	RCN	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – vrijgemaakt</i> (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – liberated)
GS	GS	General Synod (broadest assembly of churches practising Dort polity)
HC	HC	Heidelberg Catechism
ICRC	ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
IJC	JCI	<i>Institutio Joao Calvina</i> – John Calvin Institute (IRB – Brazil)
IPB	PCB	<i>Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil</i> (Presbyterian Church of Brazil)
IRB	RCB	<i>Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil</i> (Reformed Churches in Brazil)
IRC	IRC	Inter-church Relations Committee (of the RPCNA)

<b>Language of origin</b>	<b>English equivalent</b>	<b>Spelled out</b>
IRCK	<i>IRCK</i>	Independent Reformed Church in Korea
KKERPE	<i>RPCCEE</i>	<i>Kozep es Kelet Europai Reformatus Presbiterianus Egyhaz</i> Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe
KPCA-K	<i>KPCA-K</i>	Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin)
KPCK	<i>KPCK</i>	Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (Previously cited as PCK (Kosin))
LRCA	<i>LRCA</i>	Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford
NAPARC	<i>NAPARC</i>	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
NGK	<i>NRC</i>	<i>Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (Netherlands Reformed Churches)
OPC	<i>OPC</i>	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCA	<i>PCA</i>	Presbyterian Church in America
PRCA	<i>PRCA</i>	Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia
RCK	<i>RCK</i>	Reformed Churches in Korea
RCNZ	<i>RCNZ</i>	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
RCUS	<i>RCUS</i>	Reformed Church in the United States
RES / REC	<i>RES / REC</i>	Reformed Ecumenical Synod, later Reformed Ecumenical Council
RPCNA	<i>RPCNA</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
RPCT	<i>RPCT</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan
RPF	<i>RPF</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship [in India]
RSE	<i>RSE</i>	Regional Synod East (of the CanRC)
RSW	<i>RSW</i>	Regional Synod West (of the CanRC)
SCBP	<i>SCBP</i>	Standing Committee for the <i>Book of Praise</i> (of the CanRC)
SERK	<i>IERC[G]</i>	<i>Selbständige Evangelisch Reformierte Kirche</i> Independent Evangelical Reformed Church [in Germany]
STAKRI		Theological seminary & teachers' college operated under supervision of the GGRI-Timor
STT		Theological seminary in Indonesia. Referenced in this report are the STT supervised by the GGRI-KB, the STT supervised by the GGRI-NTT, and STT-Salem, where GGRC and some GGRI-NTT students go.
URCNA	<i>URCNA</i>	United Reformed Churches in North America
WARC	<i>WARC</i>	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCRC	<i>WCRC</i>	World Communion of Reformed Churches
WRF	<i>WRF</i>	World Reformed Fellowship